

Northern Ireland Labour Market Report

Theme: Labour Market

Frequency: Monthly

Geographical Area: Northern Ireland

Published: 14th December 2021

Key Points

- The number of employees receiving pay through HMRC PAYE in NI in November 2021 was 771,000, an increase of 0.7% over the month and 4.9% over the year. This is the highest on record and the sixth consecutive month that employee numbers have been above pre-COVID levels.
- Earnings from the HMRC PAYE indicated that NI employees had a median monthly pay of £1,848 in November 2021, an increase of £3 (0.2%) over the month and £68 (3.8%) over the year.
- In November 2021, the seasonally adjusted number of people on the claimant count was 44,500 (4.5% of the workforce), which is a decrease of 1,500 (3.4%) from the previous month's revised figure. The November claimant count is 30% less than the recent peak in May 2020, and 46% higher than the pre-pandemic count in March 2020.
- NISRA, acting on behalf of the Department for the Economy, received confirmation that 130 redundancies occurred in November 2021. At 3,070, the annual total was 35% less than in the previous year (4,730). Over the year from 1st December 2020 to 30th November 2021, 2,280 redundancies were proposed, 79% less than in the previous 12 months.
- Businesses reported that employee jobs increased by 1.0% over the quarter and over the year to 779,470 jobs in September 2021. This marks the first annual increase since June 2020. September 2021 estimates showed that employee jobs have almost returned to the pre-pandemic December 2019 level (-0.1% or -460 jobs).
- The latest NI seasonally adjusted unemployment rate (the proportion of economically active people aged 16+ who were unemployed) for the period August-October 2021 was estimated from the Labour Force Survey at 3.6%. The unemployment rate decreased by 0.4 percentage points (pps) over the quarter and by 0.2pps over the year. Neither the quarterly nor annual changes were statistically significant.
- The proportion of people aged 16 to 64 in work (the employment rate) decreased over the quarter and over the year by 0.8pps to 70.4%. Neither the quarterly nor annual changes were statistically significant.
- The economic inactivity rate (the proportion of people aged 16 to 64 who were not working and not seeking or available to work) increased over the quarter by 1.1pps and over the year by 1.0pps to 26.9%. Neither the quarterly nor annual changes were statistically significant.
- The total number of weekly hours worked in NI was estimated at 27.8million, an increase of 2.2% on the previous quarter and an increase of 5.2% on the equivalent period last year.

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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:

- Redesigned the Labour Market Report, providing more context to results by setting recent changes within context of longer term trends;
- Removed pre-release access to enhance trustworthiness, and brought forward the publication date as a result;
- Improved timeliness of [quarterly labour force survey tables](#) (ranging from 1 week to 3 months) by incorporating quarterly tables in the main Labour Market Report Publication
- 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.
- Temporarily changed the timing of release in line with change in ONS release practices in [response to COVID-19](#).
- Included additional administrative sources of labour market data to provide a fuller picture of the labour market

1. Summary of Labour Market Statistics

Updated December 2021

Change over quarter

Seasonally adjusted LFS estimates for Northern Ireland for the period August-October 2021 showed that, over the quarter:

- the unemployment rate decreased by 0.4pps to 3.6% Not statistically significant
- the employment rate decreased by 0.8pps to 70.4% Not statistically significant
- the economic inactivity rate increased by 1.1pps to 26.9% Not statistically significant

The number of employee jobs at September 2021 was estimated at 779,470. This was:

- an increase of 1.0% (+7,520 jobs) over the quarter from the revised June 2021 estimate of 771,950.

The seasonally adjusted experimental claimant count (Jobseeker's Allowance Claimants and those claimants of Universal Credit who were claiming principally for the reason of being unemployed) showed that in November 2021, there was:

- a decrease of 3.4% (1,500) over the month to 44,500.

Experimental statistics from HMRC PAYE indicated that in November 2021:

- 771,000 people were payrolled employees, an increase of 0.7% from the previous month; and
- median monthly pay for employees in NI was £1,848, an increase of 0.2% (£3) over the month.

During November 2021 there were:

- 130 confirmed redundancies notified to the Department, approximately half the monthly average in 2021 (January to October average: 250)

Table 1: Labour Market Summary	Time Period	Estimate (95% Confidence interval)	Change over quarter (95% Confidence interval)	Change over year (95% Confidence interval)
Unemployment ¹	Aug-Oct 2021	32,000 (+/-6,000)	-4,000 (+/-6,000)	-2,000 (+/-10,000)
Employment ²	Aug-Oct 2021	853,000 (+/-20,000)	-6,000 (+/-18,000)	-9,000 (+/-30,000)
Economically inactive ²	Aug-Oct 2021	590,000 (+/-19,000)	11,000 (+/-18,000)	12,000 (+/-29,000)
Unemployment rate ¹	Aug-Oct 2021	3.6% (+/-0.7pps)	-0.4pps (+/-0.7pps)	-0.2pps (+/-1.1pps)
Employment rate ²	Aug-Oct 2021	70.4% (+/-1.7pps)	-0.8pps (+/-1.4pps)	-0.8pps (+/-2.5pps)
Economic inactivity rate ²	Aug-Oct 2021	26.9% (+/-1.6pps)	1.1pps (+/-1.4pps)	1.0pps (+/-2.4pps)
Employee jobs ³	September 2021	779,470 (+/- 5,370)	+7,520	+8,070
		Estimate	Change over month	Change over year
Experimental Claimant Count ⁴	November 2021	44,500	-1,500	-14,800
Redundancies ⁵ - Confirmed	November 2021	130	-90	-290
Redundancies ⁵ - Proposed	November 2021	*	*	*
Payrolled Employees ⁶	November 2021	771,000	5,600	35,800
Median Monthly pay ⁷	November 2021	£1,848	£3	£68

[Download Table 1 data](#)

LFS data are seasonally adjusted. More information on confidence intervals is available on the [background information page](#)⁸ in the Estimating and reporting uncertainty paper.

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

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

³ Employee jobs survey date for Quarter 3 was 6th September 2021, data rounded to the nearest 10 and seasonally adjusted.

⁴ The number of claimants on 11th November, seasonally adjusted, and rounded to nearest 100.

⁵ Redundancies in the calendar month, not seasonally adjusted, and rounded to 10. Estimates with less than three returns are suppressed (*).

⁶ HMRC Pay-As-You-Earn Real Time Information, rounded to 100 and seasonally adjusted.

⁷ HMRC Pay-As-You-Earn Real Time Information, seasonally adjusted.

NI Labour Market Structure: Change over year

Seasonally adjusted LFS estimates for Northern Ireland for the period August-October 2021 showed that over the year:

- the unemployment rate decreased by 0.2pps to 3.6% Not statistically significant
- the employment rate decreased by 0.8pps to 70.4% Not statistically significant
- the economic inactivity rate increased by 1.0pps to 26.9% Not statistically significant

The employee jobs total in Northern Ireland at September 2021 was 779,470 jobs representing:

- an increase of 1.0% (+8,070 jobs) over the year from the revised September 2020 estimate of 771,400.

The seasonally adjusted experimental claimant count showed that in November 2021, there was:

- a decrease of 24.9% (14,800) over the year to 44,500.

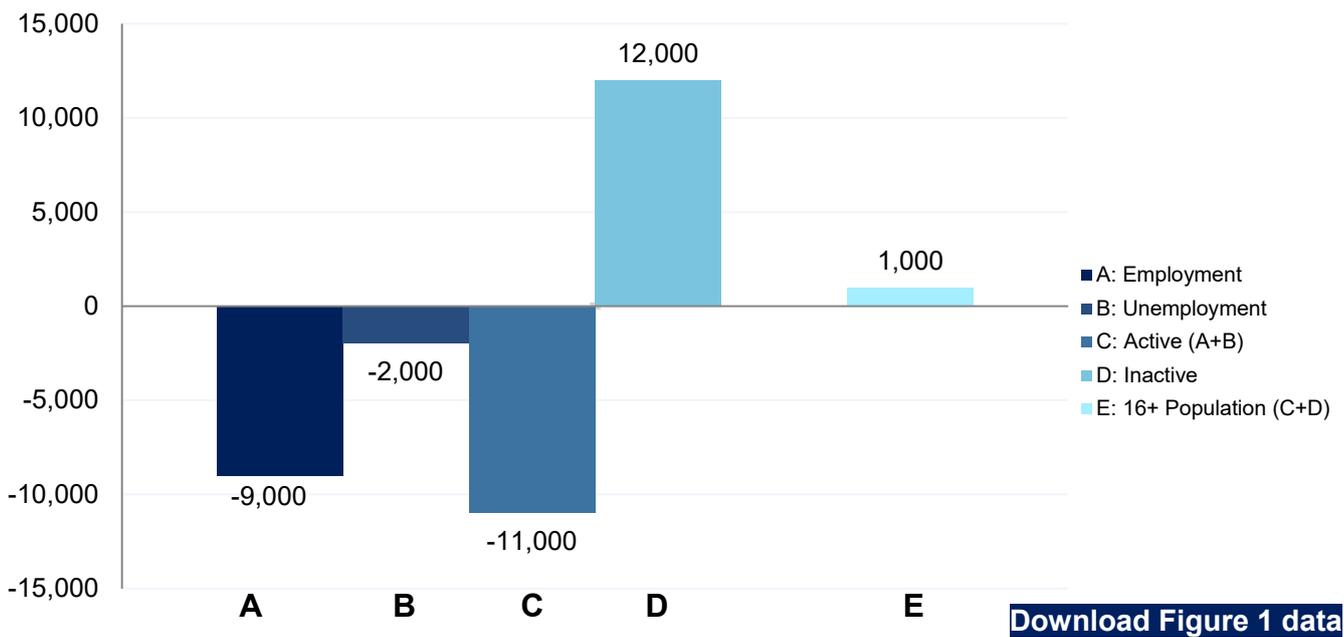
Experimental statistics from HMRC PAYE indicated that, in November 2021:

- 771,000 people were payrolled employees, an increase of 4.9% from November 2020; and
- median monthly pay for employees in NI was £1,848, an increase of 3.8% (£68) from the same period one year earlier.

Over the latest twelve-month period there were:

- 3,070 confirmed redundancies, which was 35% less than the previous year (4,730)
- 2,280 redundancies were proposed, a decrease of 79% from the previous year (10,720).

Figure 1: NI labour market structure (16+): change over year



Note: figures rounded so may not sum

UK summary

Seasonally adjusted LFS estimates for the UK for the period August-October 2021 showed:

- the unemployment rate (4.2%) decreased by 0.4pps over the quarter and by 0.9pps over the year;
- the employment rate (75.5%) increased by 0.2pps over the quarter and by 0.5pps over the year; and
- the economic inactivity rate (21.2%) increased by 0.1pps over the quarter and by 0.2pps over the year.

Commentary

Payrolled employees and payroll earnings continue to be above the pre-pandemic level, whilst employee jobs almost returned to the pre-pandemic peak level in September. Employment levels (which includes self-employed) and hours worked have yet to return to pre-pandemic levels and similarly claimant count, unemployment and economic inactivity all remain above.

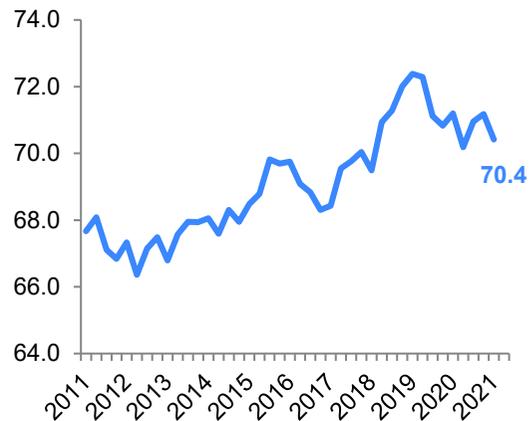
The latest HMRC payroll data was the highest level on record in November and 2.5% above those recorded in March 2020 pre-COVID. Businesses reported, via the Quarterly Employment Survey, that employee jobs increased over both the quarter and the year to 779,470 jobs in September 2021. Although this total is slightly below the pre-pandemic December 2019 series high (-0.1% or -460 jobs) it marks the first annual increase since June 2020. The annual increase was largely driven by the services sector (+1.2% or +7,630 jobs).

The number of proposed and confirmed redundancies remained low in recent months. The annual total proposed redundancies to November (2,280) is the lowest rolling-twelve month total since January 2014, while there was a 35% decrease in confirmed redundancies to November when compared to the previous year.

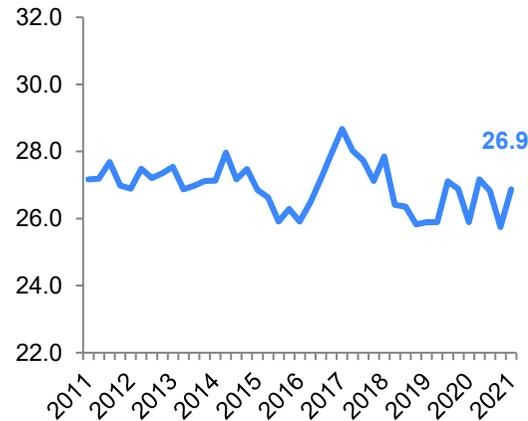
The Labour Force Survey shows the total number of hours worked (August-October 2021) has increased by 5.2% over the year. Compared to the pre-pandemic levels in November-January 2020, the total number of hours worked in August-October was 3.6% below, whilst the employment rate was 1.9pps below. Both the unemployment and economic inactivity rates remain above the pre-pandemic position (1.2pps and 1.0pps above, respectively).

Labour Market Statistics

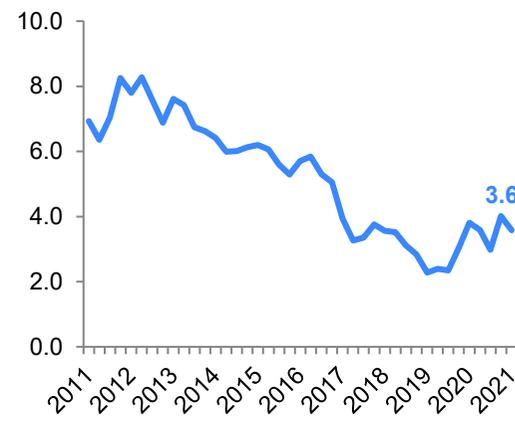
Employment – 70.4%



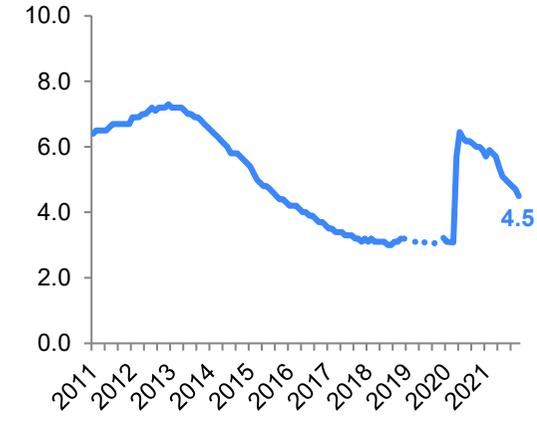
Economic Inactivity – 26.9%



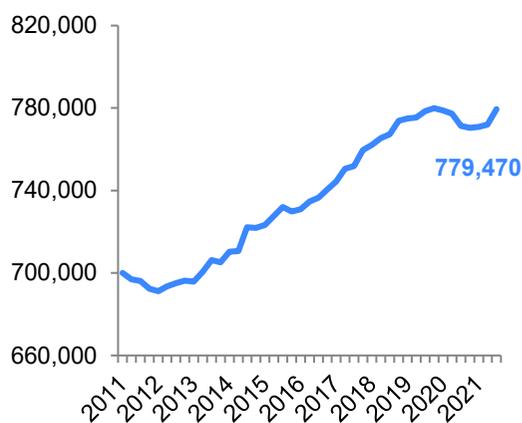
Unemployment – 3.6%



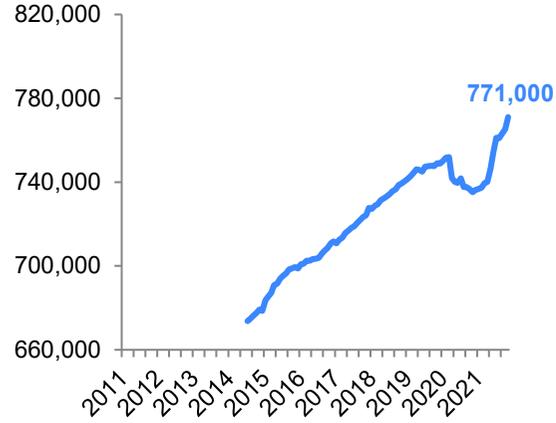
Claimant Count – 4.5%



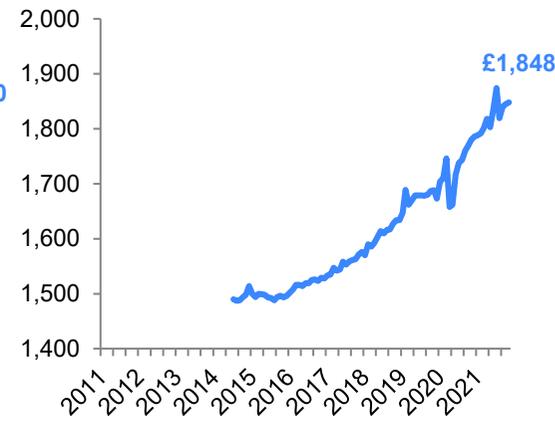
Employee Jobs – 779,470



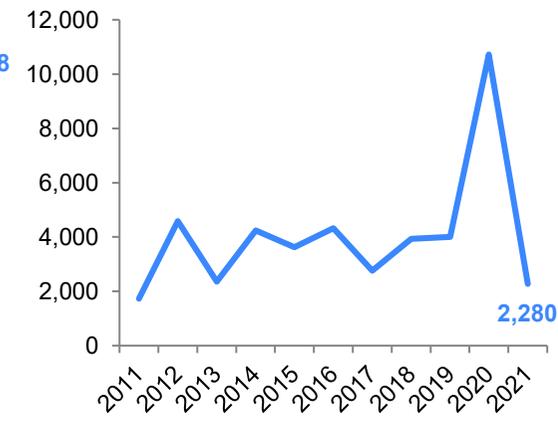
RTI Employment – 771,000



RTI Earnings – £1,848



Proposed Redundancies – 2,280



Labour Force Survey, August-October 2021, seasonally adjusted and subject to future revisions.
 Quarterly Employment Survey, September 2021, seasonally adjusted and subject to future revisions.
 Redundancies, Claimant Count and PAYE Real Time Information, November 2021

Data published – 14th December 2021

Economic Overview Dashboard - <https://datavis.nisra.gov.uk/economy-and-labour-market/economic-overview.html>

Things users need to know

Today's release contains updated labour market indicators derived from household surveys, business surveys, and administrative data sources. Although the broad concepts are similar across sources, differences in reference periods, definitions and methodology exist which impact the interpretation of the statistics. Of particular note is the 'location' of the furloughed in the estimates. Those who were furloughed under the [Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme \(CJRS\)](#) or receiving a grant through the Self Employment Income Support Scheme (SEISS) are likely* to be included in the Labour Force Survey (LFS) estimates of employment and not within the LFS unemployment estimates. (*As labour market status is self-defined by respondents in the survey). Similarly, employees on the CJRS are included in the HMRC count of employees paid through payroll, and the Quarterly Employment Survey (QES) estimate of employee jobs. In contrast, a proportion of those receiving grants through CJRS and SEISS may be accessing Universal Credit unemployment benefits as a 'top-up' payment, and are included in the experimental Claimant Count. More information is available in the [comparison of labour market data sources](#) article by ONS. The CJRS ended on 30th September 2021, which was also the last date for making a SEISS claim.

[ONS recommend](#) HMRC payroll data as the best single indicator of the labour market. Experimental statistics from HMRC Pay-As-You-Earn (PAYE) system are included and show the number of employees paid through PAYE and a measure of employee earnings. Flash estimates for November are included that are based on 85% of data and subject to revision in next month's release. Breakdowns by age and industry are now published quarterly from the HMRC Pay-As-You-Earn (PAYE) system. The next breakdowns by age will be published in January 2022 and by industry will be published in February 2022.

NISRA suspended all face to face household interviews from March 2020 onwards due to the COVID pandemic and all LFS interviews since then have been conducted by telephone. This change has resulted in a reduction in the achieved sample size, when compared to pre-pandemic levels, which in turn has affected the precision of the estimates. For example, the confidence interval around the employment rate has increased by +/-0.2pps between November-January 2020 and current estimates.

LFS estimates were reweighted from January 2020 and released in July 2021. The estimates for NI have not had the non-response bias adjustment from the recent [reweighting](#) fully applied and in addition there was a small error in the implementation of the reweighting methodology affecting all UK estimates. When calculating three-month averages for the PAYE real-time information (RTI) the months used were the previous three month average. The impact of this time lag on LFS economic activity estimates at UK level is mostly below 0.1% and the impact on rates is less than 0.02 percentage points.

Accordingly, users are advised to assess trends in NI estimates based on LFS data. ONS will continue to investigate this and will keep users advised.

Base effects

Users should note that many of the annual changes in the report are based on a comparison of current data against data relating to the early quarters of the pandemic. Where possible a comparison with one year ago as well as a comparison against the pre-pandemic value is provided for context.

Labour Market Statistics User Group

The most recent Labour Market Statistics User Group took place in September 2021. The presentation, along with Q&A and feedback documents from this session, is available from the [Labour Market Statistics user engagement page](#) on the NISRA website.

Users may also be interested to know that the [Office for Statistics Regulation](#) is holding a [consultation](#) on the release time for official statistics. Users can respond by 21 December 2021 by emailing regulation@statistics.gov.uk.

Context

The LMR is a monthly overview of key labour market statistics for NI. It includes figures from the Labour Force Survey (LFS), the Quarterly Employment Survey, claimant count, redundancies counts, and HMRC PAYE statistics. More information about the data sources can be found in Section 5. Where available, we have included equivalent UK data (produced by the ONS) as a comparison.

A Labour Market Outputs consultation in summer 2019 ([Labour Market Statistics User Engagement page](#)) showed labour market statistics are used for policy monitoring and research, academic and private sector research, service planning and delivery.

Government Departments are key users of labour market statistics. The Labour Force Survey is used to calculate 7 of the 49 draft 2016 – 2021 Programme for Government Indicators, helping to measure progress towards three high level outcomes – We prosper through a strong competitive regionally balanced economy; We have a more equal society; We have more people working in better jobs. The Labour Force Survey is also used to provide baselines for DfE’s draft Industrial Strategy, OECD Skills Strategy for NI, and DfC’s Enabling Success Strategy. 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 [user requested](#) labour market analysis in order to monitor policies, for example, equality and employment. Significant non-governmental users of labour market statistics (including the media, banks, academics, private consultants, and the general public) use the data primarily for reporting or researching the performance of the economy. Labour market statistics attract widespread media coverage, with a number of broadcasters publishing articles on the labour market on a monthly basis, generally on the day of publication of the LMR.

For more on how COVID-19 has affected the production of statistics please see the COVID-19 and the production of statistics section on the NISRA website and an ONS Statement on [ensuring the best possible information during COVID-19 through safe data collection page](#).

[DfE Economic Commentary page](#) provides an overview of the state of the Northern Ireland economy including the labour market, in context with the UK and Republic of Ireland and the most up-to-date official statistics on the economy and labour market are available on the [Economic Overview page](#) of the NISRA website.

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

- [Employment and labour market page](#)
- [Guide to Labour Market Statistics page](#)
- [Glossary page](#)

2 Unemployment

Updated December 2021

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. Estimates are subject to sampling error. (Please see section 5 and the [Estimating and Reporting Uncertainty](#) paper for more details on sampling error and survey methodology changes employed during the pandemic).

LFS Unemployment: The International Labour Organisation (ILO) defines unemployed as those aged 16+ 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.

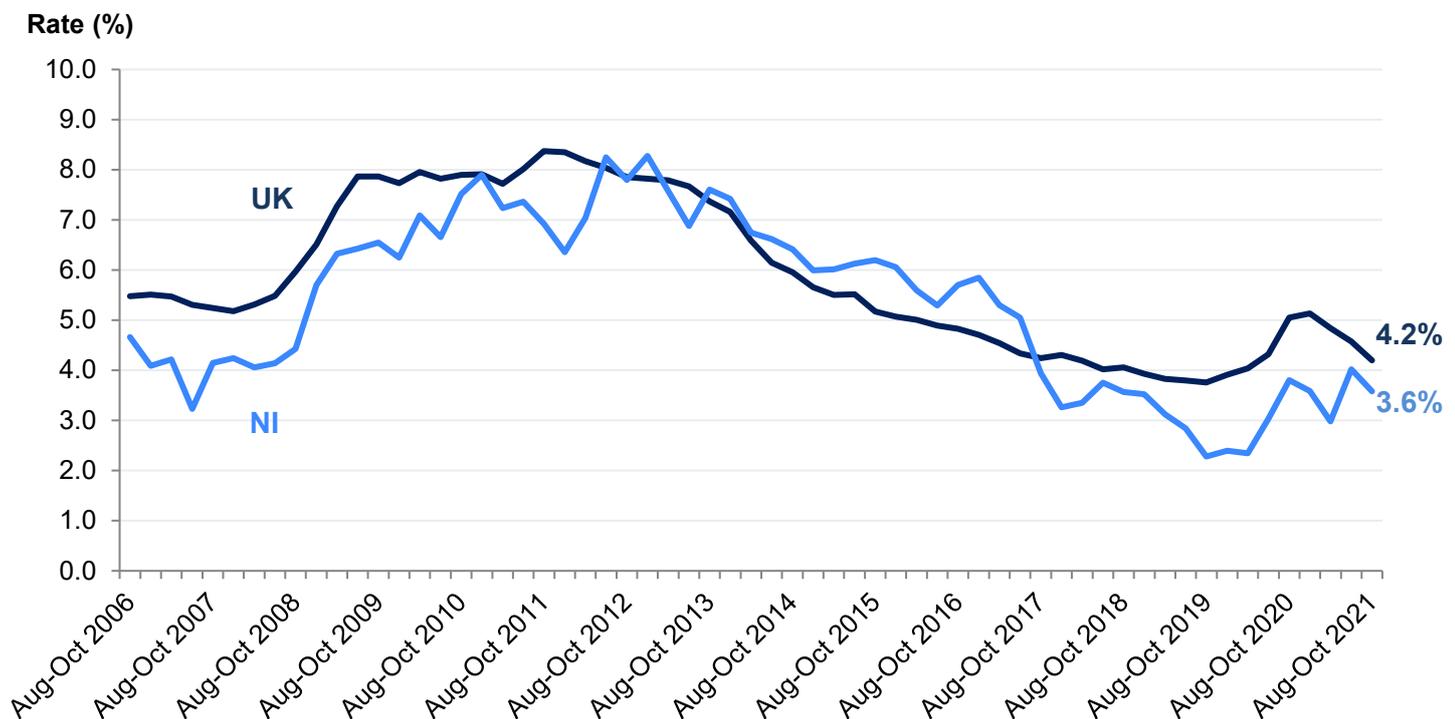
Long-Term Unemployment: Those who have been unemployed for 12 months or more.

Youth Unemployment: Unemployed people aged 16-24 years.

Key Findings

- LFS unemployment rate in NI for August-October 2021 decreased over the quarter and over the year to 3.6%
- The UK unemployment rate is estimated at 4.2%

Figure 2: Seasonally adjusted unemployment rate (16+), Aug-Oct 2006 to Aug-Oct 2021



[Download Figure 2 data](#)

Figure 2 shows unemployment rates on the current 3-month rolling average for NI and the UK over the last 15 years. During this 15-year period, the UK rate peaked at 8.4% in late-2011 while the NI rate peaked at 8.3% in early-2013. Based on data contained within figure 2, the NI and UK rates reached a low point in late-2019, prior to the COVID pandemic. The NI rate has been below the UK rate since mid-2017.

LFS unemployment

The unemployment rate (16+) for the period August-October 2021 was estimated at 3.6%. This was:

- a decrease of 0.4pps over the quarter and of 0.2pps over the year;
- the male (16+) unemployment rate (4.4%) increased by 0.4pps over the year;
- the female (16+) unemployment rate (2.7%) decreased by 0.8pps over the year; and
- below the overall UK average rate (4.2%).

The number of unemployed people aged 16+ was estimated at 32,000, which was:

- down 4,000 from last quarter;
- down 2,000 from the same period last year; and
- an increase of 11,000 from the series low (since series began in 1995) recorded in same period two years ago (pre-COVID pandemic).

Long-term and youth unemployment

In August-October 2021, the percentage of unemployed who have been unemployed for 1 year or more (long-term) was 36.2% in NI. The youth (16-24) unemployment rate was 9.9%.

*Please note that the estimate for youth employment in Northern Ireland is based on a smaller sample size than the overall unemployment estimate. This may result in less precise estimates which should be treated as indicative, in particular when comparing with other regions or over time.

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

Comparison between LFS Unemployment and the Experimental Claimant Count

LFS is a sample survey conducted to International Labour Organisation (ILO) definitions. It provides the official unemployment measure in NI with a time lag of six weeks between the end of data collection and publication of estimates. The experimental claimant count is a measure of the number of people claiming benefits principally for the reason of being unemployed and is derived from Jobs and Benefits Offices systems. Statistics derived from it are influenced by changes to the benefit system, such as the introduction of Universal Credit. It is a timelier labour market indicator than measures produced from the LFS, with estimates published one month after the claimant count date.

There is a similar overall trend between LFS unemployment and the claimant count for most of the twenty year period from 2000 – 2020. Recent figures, however, show a clear divergence and highlight the difference in methodology and definitions between the two measures. One important difference contributing to the divergence since April 2020 is that those furloughed under the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme and not working would be included within the LFS employment estimates as ‘temporarily away from work’, and not the LFS unemployed estimates. In contrast, those who were furloughed could potentially be included within the Universal Credit ‘searching for work’ conditionality and therefore be counted within the experimental claimant count.

A fuller user guide setting out the differences between the experimental claimant count and the LFS unemployment is available from the [differences between the ILO unemployment and claimant count page](#) on the NISRA website.

Claimant count (experimental)

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.

Claimant Count (experimental): consists of all people claiming Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA) plus those Universal Credit (UC) claimants who were claiming principally for the reason of being unemployed. Some claimants are wholly unemployed and seeking work, while others may be employed but with low earnings that make them eligible for unemployment related benefit support. **The most recent reference date was 11th November.**

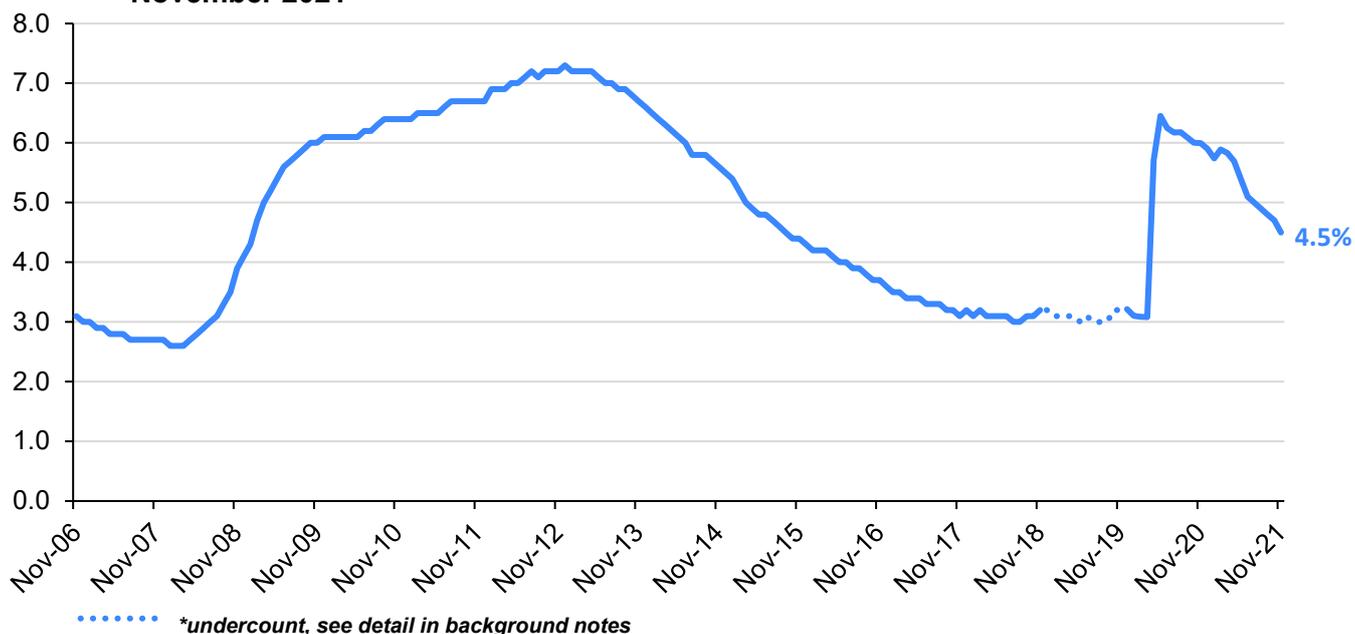
Universal Credit: Universal Credit was rolled out in NI for new claims of six benefits, including income-based JSA, on a phased geographical basis between September 2017 and December 2018.

Percentage of workforce: 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, and government-supported trainees. This measure is only available at the NI level.

Key Findings

- NI claimant count (experimental) decreased by 1,500 over the month to 44,500.
- In November 2021, 4.5% of the NI workforce was recorded on the claimant count.

Figure 3: Seasonally adjusted claimant count (experimental) monthly rates, November 2006 – November 2021



[Download Figure 3 data](#)

In March 2018, the NI claimant count measure changed from one based solely on Jobseekers Allowance (JSA) to an experimental measure based on JSA claimants and Universal Credit (UC) claimants who were claiming principally for the reason of being unemployed. Those claiming unemployment-related benefits (either UC or JSA) may be wholly unemployed and seeking work, or may be employed but with low income and/or low hours, that make them eligible for unemployment-related benefit support. Under UC a broader span of claimants became eligible for unemployment-related benefit than under the previous benefit regime.

The increases in claimant count between March 2020 and May 2020 can largely be attributed to the increase in the numbers of people becoming unemployed or having their hours reduced, resulting in very low earnings below the administrative earnings threshold. There may be some persons, previously not eligible for UC due to partner earnings, but now eligible because of work allowance increases who would

now be included within the count. Estimates to identify the extent to which each group has contributed to the increase in claimant count are not available for NI.

In November 2021, 44,500 people were recorded on the NI Claimant Count. This is 30% less than the recent peak in May 2020 and 46% more than the pre-pandemic count in March 2020.

Claimant count (experimental) unemployment

The NI seasonally adjusted claimant count was 44,500 (4.5% of the workforce) in November 2021, representing:

- a decrease of 3.4% over the month (the ninth consecutive monthly decrease)
- a decrease of 3.0% in males and 3.9% in females over the month
- the claimant count rate (4.5%) decreased by 0.2pps over the month
- a decrease of 14,800 (24.9%) over the year, and
- an increase of 14,000 (46%) since March 2020.

The UK seasonally adjusted claimant count decreased by 2.5% over the month to 1,970,000 (4.9% of the workforce).

Annual and monthly claimant count data are available on the NINIS website in the form of interactive maps for [Parliamentary Constituency](#), [Council Area](#) and [Super Output Area](#).

Further details on the experimental claimant count are available on the NISRA - Economic and Labour Market Statistics website: [Claimant Count](#)

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 required to notify the Department, therefore 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. Users should also note, all other things being equal, more redundancies in sectors dominated by large businesses would be expected as *collective redundancies* refers to 20 or more employees. Further information can be found in the [Redundancies Background Quality Report](#).

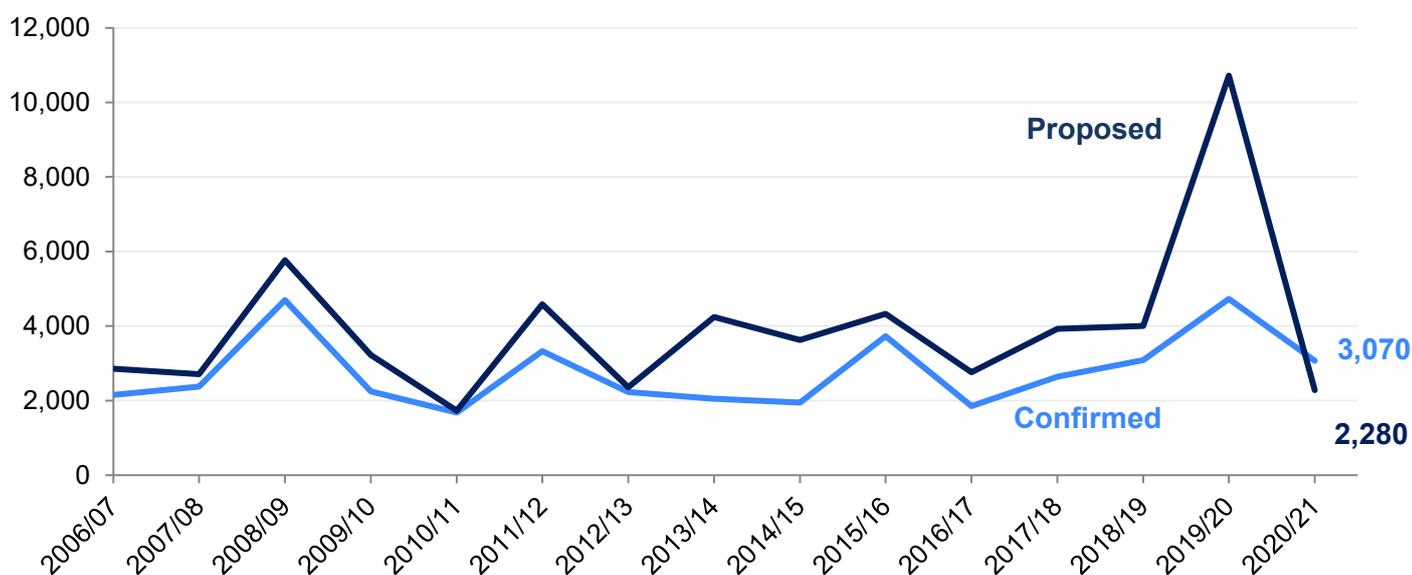
To prevent potential identification of individual businesses, redundancy totals relating to fewer than three businesses are not disclosed. Please see the [Redundancy Data Statistical Disclosure Control Policy](#) for further information.

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

- **130 redundancies were confirmed in November 2021, taking the annual total to 3,070, which was 35% less than the previous year (4,730)**
- **2,280 redundancies were proposed in the past year, the lowest rolling 12-month total since January 2014**

Figure 4: Confirmed and proposed redundancies – Annual totals, Dec-Nov 2007 to Dec-Nov 2021



[Download Figure 4 data](#)

Redundancy notification data generally shows a high degree of correlation between proposed and confirmed redundancies when grouped by year. On a monthly basis the correlation is lower as there is a time lag between proposing and making redundancies (see Figure 5). The graph above shows that, generally the number of proposed redundancies is higher than confirmed redundancies indicating that not all proposed redundancies take place.

Over the most recent twelve-month period, 2,280 redundancies were proposed and 3,070 were confirmed. These were the lowest rolling twelve-month totals since January 2014 and September 2020 respectively.

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

[Redundancies](#)

Confirmed redundancies

Employers are required by law to notify the Department of proposals to make 20 to 99 redundancies at least 30 days before the first dismissal, and, for 100 or more redundancies, 90 days before the first dismissal. This results in a time lag of at least a month between the redundancies being proposed and then being confirmed.

During November 2021, the Department was notified of:

- 130 confirmed redundancies, which was approximately half of the monthly average in 2021 (January to October average: 250)

Over the latest twelve month period there were:

- 3,070 confirmed redundancies, which was 35% less than the previous year (4,730)
- 1,220 (or 40% of all confirmed redundancies) confirmed in manufacturing
- 730 (24%) confirmed in wholesale and retail trade.

Proposed redundancies

It should be noted that since not all proposed redundancies actually take place, the confirmed total provides a better indication of real job losses.

In line with the statistical disclosure control policy to prevent potential identification of individual businesses, redundancy totals relating to fewer than 3 businesses are not disclosed. As such the number of proposed redundancies for the month of November cannot be disclosed.

Over the last twelve months to the end of November 2021 there were:

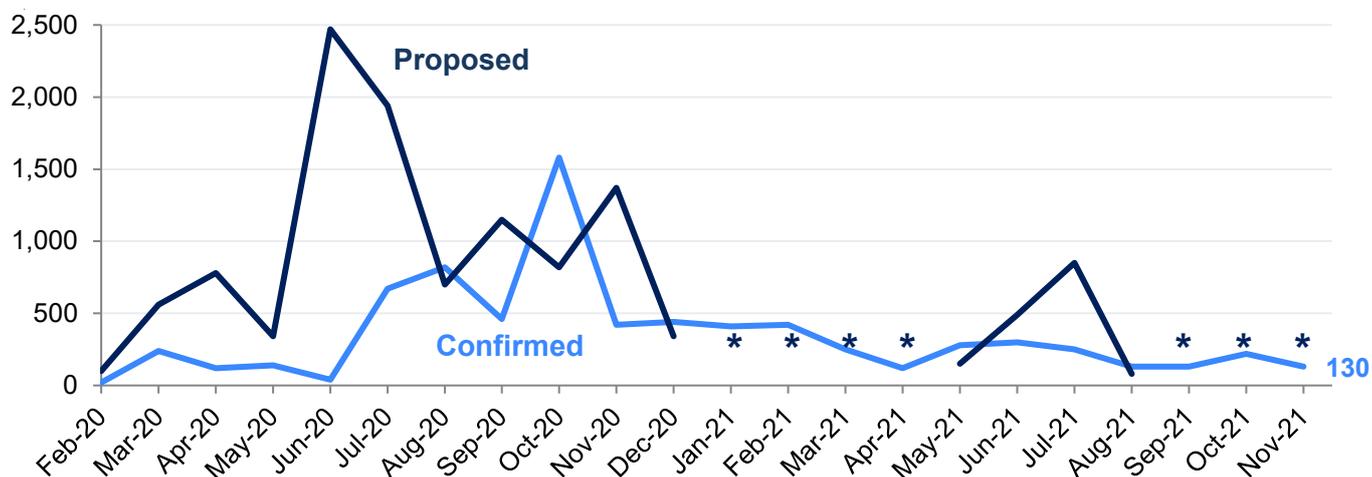
- 2,280 proposed redundancies, which was 79% less than the previous year (10,720)
- 620 (or 27% of all proposed redundancies) proposed in the wholesale and retail trade
- 380 (17%) proposed in manufacturing

Figure 5 charts monthly proposed and confirmed redundancies since February 2020.

Of note are the proposed redundancies in June and July 2020; this is the highest consecutive monthly total of proposed redundancies on record at over 4,410. More recently the number of redundancy proposals increased from May 2021 to a peak in July, but have decreased since then.

The large number of proposed redundancies in June and July 2020 translated into confirmed redundancies from July and peaked in October 2020. The October 2020 total (1,580) was the highest number on record. Confirmed redundancies have been on a general-downward trend since then, with 130 recorded in November 2021.

Figure 5: Confirmed and proposed redundancies – Monthly totals, February 2020 to November 2021



[Download Figure 5 data](#)

* Cells with less than three business returns are suppressed from August 2020

3 Employment

Updated December 2021

LFS employment

The Labour Force Survey (LFS) is a household sample survey carried out by interviewing individuals about their personal circumstances and work. It provides a rich source of information on the labour force using internationally agreed definitions. Estimates are subject to sampling error. (Please see section 5 and the [Estimating and Reporting Uncertainty](#) paper for more details on sampling error and survey methodology changes employed during the pandemic).

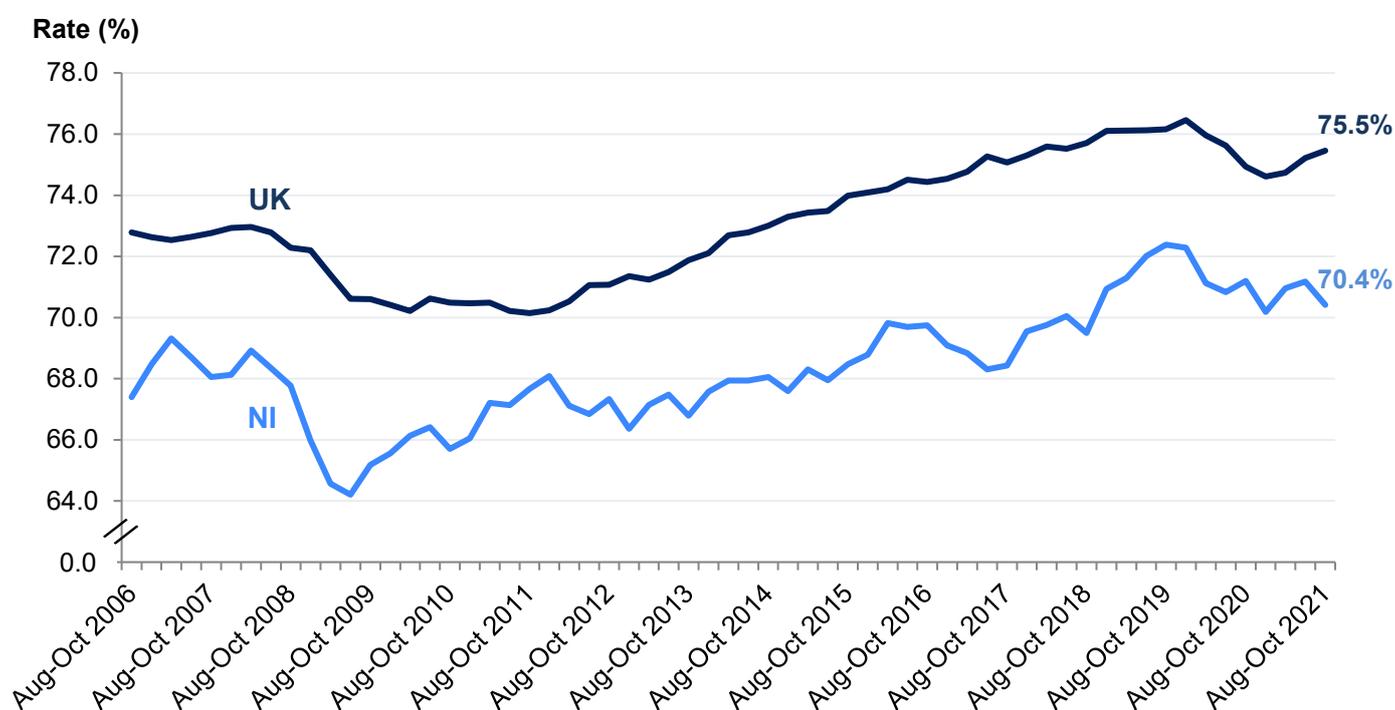
LFS employed: people aged 16 or over who did at least one hour of paid work in the reference week (whether as an employee or self-employed); those who had a paid job that they were temporarily away from; those on government-supported training and employee programmes and those doing unpaid family work.

Note: For analysis purposes, numbers refer to people aged 16 and over while rates relate to people aged between 16 and 64 years.

Key Findings

- The NI employment rate decreased over the quarter and over the year to 70.4%
- Total weekly hours worked was estimated at 27.8 million hours per week for the period August-October 2021. This was 1.4 million hours (5.2%) higher than the same period last year. Hours worked figures are not adjusted for seasonality.

Figure 6: Seasonally adjusted employment rate (16-64), Aug-Oct 2006 to Aug-Oct 2021



[Download Figure 6 data](#)

Figure 6 shows that, over the last 15 years, the NI employment rate has been consistently below the UK rate. Although showing a similar trend, the fall in the employment rate in NI between 2008 and 2009 (decrease of 4.4 percentage points) was steeper than the fall in the UK rate. The most recent NI employment rate for those aged 16-64 for the period August-October 2021 was estimated at 70.4%, a decrease of 0.8pps compared with the same period last year. The UK employment rate for those aged 16-64 for the same period was 75.5%, an increase of 0.5pps over the year.

Employment rate (16-64 years)

The most recent NI employment rate for those aged 16-64 for the period August-October 2021 was estimated at 70.4%. This was:

- A decrease of 0.8pps over the quarter and over the year;
- below the overall UK average rate (75.5%).

Annual changes by sex included:

- the male (16-64) employment rate (71.3%) decreased by 2.9pps over the year and
- the female (16-64) employment rate (69.5%) increased by 1.3pps over the year.

UK regional comparison

The employment rate in NI (70.4%) was:

- 5.0% below the UK average (75.5%); and
- The second-lowest rate among the twelve UK regions.

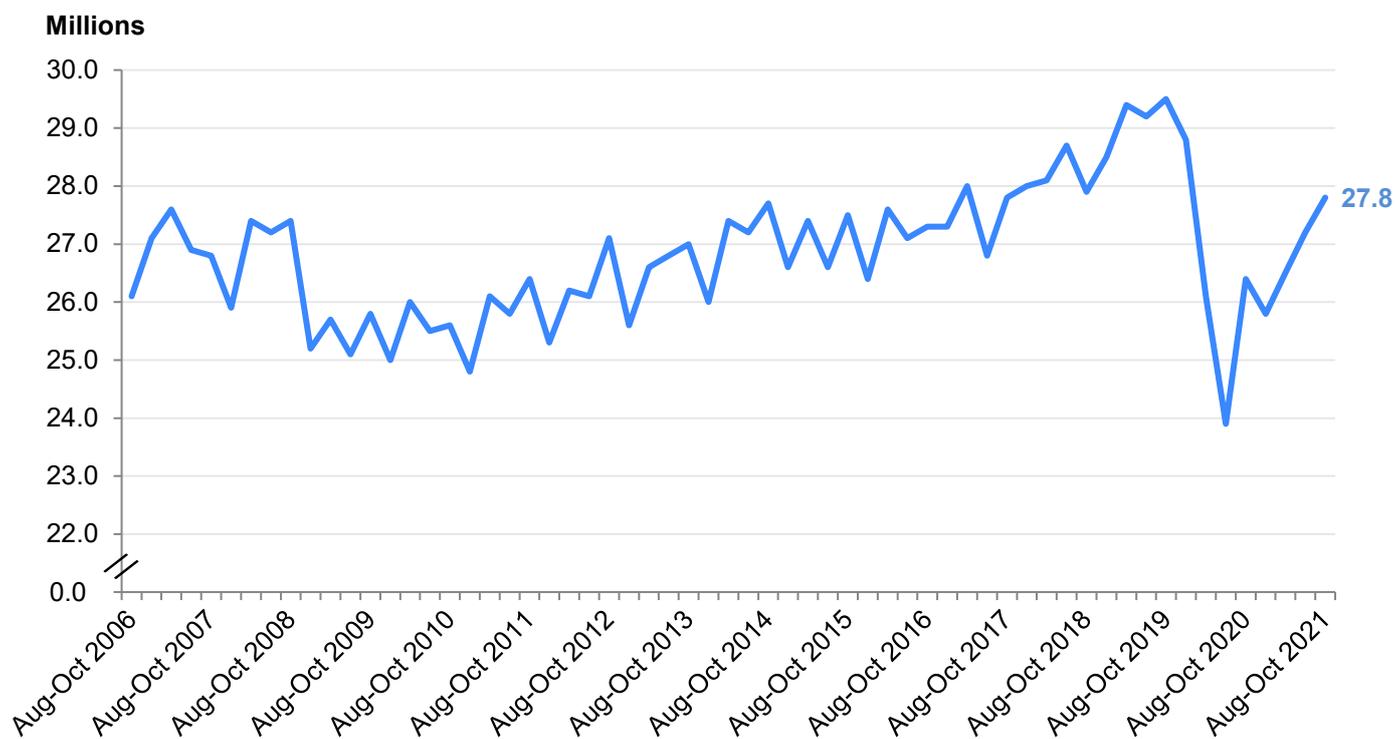
Please note that the following estimates are not adjusted for seasonality.

Total weekly hours

The total number of weekly hours worked in Northern Ireland was estimated at 27.8 million hours, this was:

- An increase of 2.2% on the previous quarter (May-July 2021);
- an increase of 1.4 million hours (5.2%) from the same period last year (August-October 2020); and
- 1.7 million hours, or 5.6%, below the same period in 2019.

Figure 7: Total weekly hours worked (16+), Aug-Oct 2006 to Aug-Oct 2021



[Download Figure 7 data](#)

Figure 7 shows that, like many labour market indicators, total weekly hours worked shows a seasonal pattern. Outside of these seasonal variations a trend of increasing weekly hours worked can be seen between 2009 and 2020.

When examining the time series presented in figure 7, the total number of weekly hours worked estimate of 27.8 million hours for August-October 2021 is an increase of 2.2% from the previous quarter and is 16.3% higher than the series-low point of 23.9 million hours in May-July 2020. In addition, this figure is 5.6% below the series-high point of 29.5 million hours in the same period two years ago (August-October 2019).

HMRC PAYE Real Time Information

Experimental payrolled employee counts from HMRC PAYE Real Time Information System

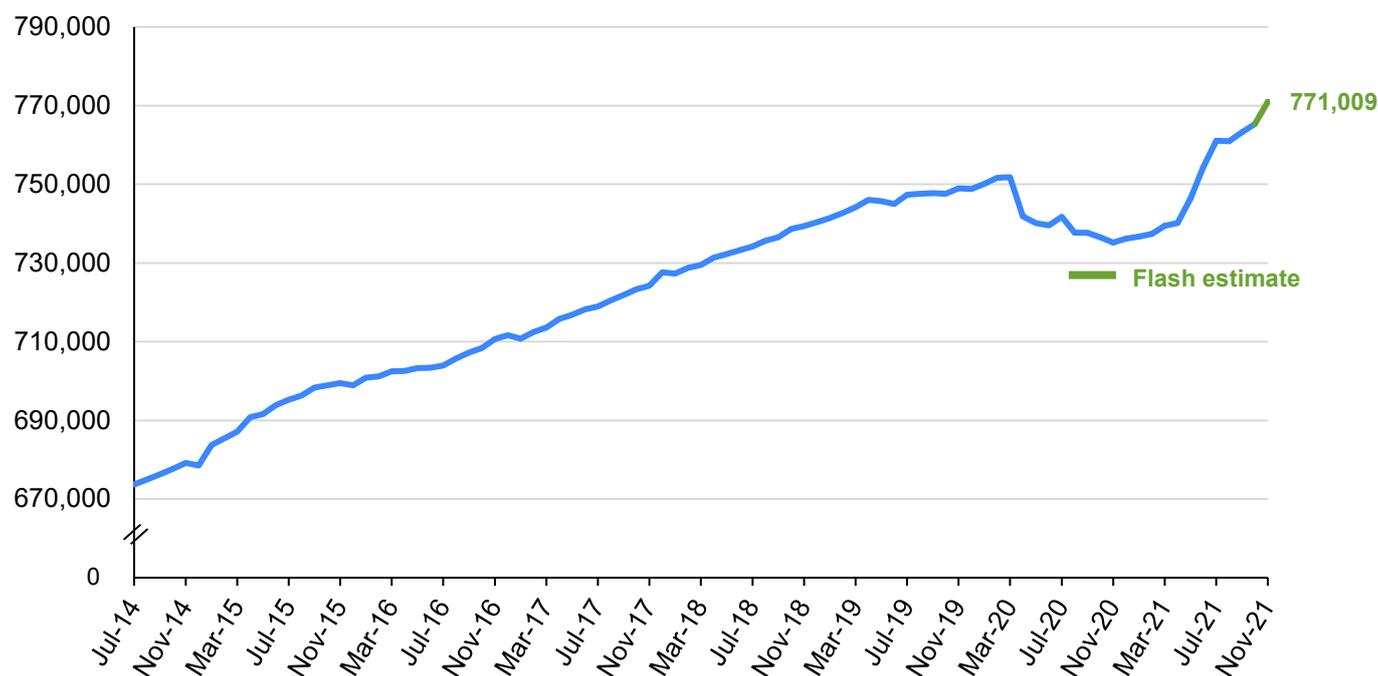
HM Revenue and Customs' (HMRC's) Pay As You Earn (PAYE) Real Time Information (RTI) system is the system employers use to take Income Tax and National Insurance contributions before they pay wages to employees. These data relate to employees paid by employers only, and do not include those who are self-employed. Data are based on where employees live and not the location of their place of work within the UK. Data are seasonally adjusted but not adjusted for inflation. As employees who are "furloughed" as part of the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme programme should still have their payments reported through this system, they should feature in these data.

The data are classed as Experimental Statistics as the methodologies used to produce the statistics are still in their development phase. Early estimates (flash estimates) for November 2021 are based on around 85% of information and may be subject to revision in next month's release when between 98% and 99% of data will be available. [Revision triangle](#) is available on the NISRA website.

Key Findings

- The number of payrolled employees in NI in November was 0.7% higher than October 2021 and 4.9% higher than November 2020
- Employee numbers were above pre-COVID levels for the sixth consecutive month
- In the UK, the number of employees increased by 0.9% over the month and 4.8% over the year to November

Figure 8: Payrolled employees from PAYE RTI, July 2014 to November 2021


[Download Figure 8 data](#)

Between 2014 and 2020 the number of payrolled employees had generally been increasing each month. Prior to COVID, payrolled employees peaked at around 752,000 in March 2020. This was followed by a sharp decrease of 10,000 employees (1.3%) to April 2020. Employee numbers remained around that level until April 2021.

Since April 2021 there has generally been an upward trend in the number of payrolled employees, with a sharp increase between April and July, and the November total is now 4.2% above the level in April. This

is the highest on record and the sixth consecutive month that employee counts have been above pre-COVID levels.

Data from the latest HMRC PAYE RTI show that:

- 771,000 people were payrolled employees in November 2021, a 0.7% increase from the previous month and 4.9% from November 2020.
- In the UK, there were 29,432,300 payrolled employees at November 2021, an increase of 0.9% over the month and 4.8% over the year.
- All regions of the UK increased over the year to November 2021, with London recording the largest increase (6.2%) and the East recording the smallest (4.0%).
- Between March 2020 and November 2021, all regions of the UK recorded an increase in payrolled employees (an increase of 1.5% overall). NI recorded the largest increase (2.5%).

Comparison between LFS Employment and the number of paid employees from HMRC PAYE RTI

The LFS and HM Revenue and Customs' (HMRC's) Pay As You Earn (PAYE) RTI measure different things. The LFS follows the International Labour Organization (ILO) definition of employment (anyone aged 16 years and over in paid work and those who had a job that they were temporarily away from in the reference week). This is the official measure of employment in NI but also has a time lag of six weeks between the end of data collection and the publication of estimates. LFS includes unpaid family workers who were employed but not paid, those earning below PAYE threshold and the self-employed but excludes those aged under 16 years, those in communal establishments, temporary foreign workers, and employees doing certain types of seasonal work.

RTI measures the number of people who are being paid through the PAYE system via company payrolls and therefore the whole population of employees rather than a sample and not the self-employed. While those receiving pay through the PAYE scheme will include those under 16, people in communal establishments and some foreign residents it excludes those in the undeclared economy whose income is not reported via PAYE, the self-employed and those members of PAYE schemes where no employee earns above the Lower Earning Limit for National Insurance or has another job. The data are also classed as Experimental Statistics as the methodologies used to produce the statistics are still in their development phase. As a result, the series are subject to revisions. Early estimates (flash estimates) with a two week time lag are based on around 85% of information and are subject to larger revisions in the following release, when between 98% to 99% of data are available.

A [blog published by ONS](#), helps to explain the differences between LFS and HMRC payroll estimates and recommends HMRC payroll data as the most timely and best single, overall indicator of the labour market.

Experimental Median monthly earnings from HMRC PAYE Real Time Information System

Median measures the amount earned by the average employee, i.e. the level of earnings at which half the population are above and half the population are below.

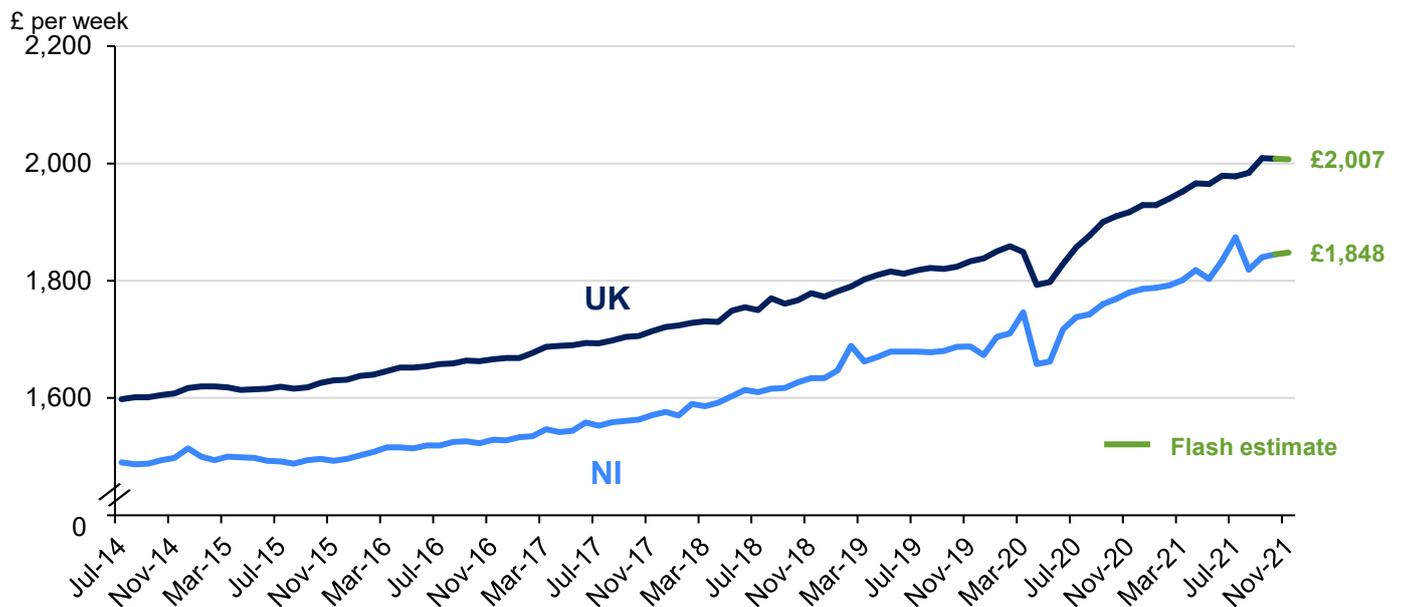
Note: The percentage change of the median has been calculated using rounded figures.

A comparison of earnings statistics from the Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings (ASHE) and HMRC Pay As You Earn (PAYE) Real Time Information (RTI) is available on the [NISRA website](#).

Key Findings

- Median monthly pay increased by 0.2% (£3) over the month to November to £1,848 and was 3.8% (£68) higher than the same period last year.
- UK median monthly pay decreased by 0.05% (£1) over the month to November to £2,007 and increased by 4.7% (£90) over the year.

Figure 9: Median Monthly Pay from PAYE RTI, July 2014 to November 2021



[Download Figure 9 data](#)

Median employee pay in NI and UK was generally on an increasing trend between mid-2015 and early 2020. A sharp increase in median pay of 2.1% was seen between February and March 2020 in NI, followed by a decrease of 5.0% in NI and 3.0% in the UK between March and April 2020. This coincided with decreases in the number of paid employees between March and April.

From April 2020, median employee pay has shown an upward trend, however in recent months some volatility has been seen in the results. Between May and July, median pay increased by 3.9%, however, this was followed in August by the largest single monthly decrease (2.9%) in that period. Median employee pay increased again in the latest month (0.2%) and is now 5.8% higher than the pre-pandemic level in March 2020.

Data from the latest HMRC PAYE RTI show that:

- NI had a median monthly pay of £1,848 in November 2021, which was an increase of 0.2% on the previous month and 3.8% from November 2020
- UK had a median monthly pay of £2,007 in November 2021, which was a decrease of 0.05% on the previous month and an increase of 4.7% from November 2020
- NI had the third smallest annual increase of the 12 UK regions and has the lowest median in the UK. London has the highest median pay (£2,419).
- Since March 2020, earnings in NI have increased by 5.8%, lower than all the other UK regions which increased by at least 7.5%. The UK as a whole increased by 8.5%.

Further information on UK monthly pay, UK pay distribution, methodology, data source, collection, and coverage of PAYE RTI data can be found on the [Earnings and employment from PAYE page](#)

Quarterly Employment Survey (QES)

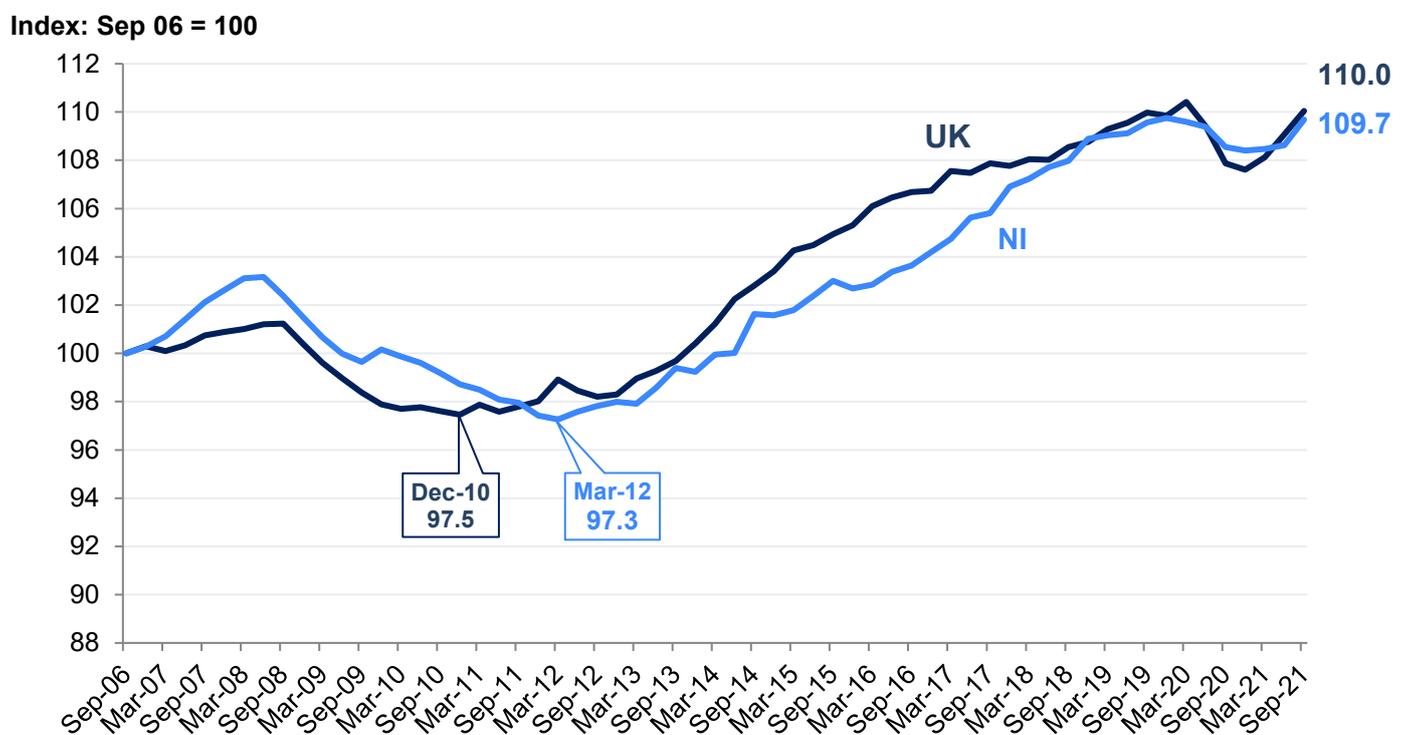
Employee jobs estimates are calculated from the Quarterly Employment Survey (QES) aspect of the Quarterly Business Survey (QBS). The QES has a sample size of approximately 6,000 companies that are asked to provide employment data for each of their business activities. **The survey date for Quarter 3 was 6th September 2021 for Northern Ireland.** Those who are furloughed under the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS) are included in employee jobs estimates.

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 in NI increased over both the quarter and the year to 779,470 jobs in September 2021. September 2021 marked the first quarter of annual increase in employee jobs following four previous consecutive quarters of annual decline.
- The quarterly increase in employee jobs in September 2021 was largely driven by the services industry sector (+6,100 jobs). All broad industry sectors apart from construction experienced increases in employee jobs over the year.
- September 2021 marked the fourth consecutive quarter of negative annualised growth rate (-0.5%).
- Following a period of annual decline in public sector employee jobs between June 2015 and June 2017, there have been seventeen consecutive quarters of annual growth in public sector jobs to September 2021. Meanwhile, September 2021 marked the first quarter of annual growth in private sector jobs after five consecutive quarters of annual decline.

Figure 10: Index of Employee Jobs, September 2006 to September 2021



[Download Figure 10 data](#)

Figure 10 shows estimated seasonally adjusted employee jobs, indexed to allow comparison between NI and the UK. The UK reached a low point in December 2010, more than a year before the NI low in March 2012. There are now 88,310 more employee jobs in NI since the lowest point in March 2012, and 3,526,000 more jobs in the UK since December 2010.

Employee Jobs

The seasonally adjusted employee jobs total in Northern Ireland at September 2021 was 779,470, which was:

- an increase of 1.0% (+7,520 jobs) over the quarter from the revised June 2021 estimate of 771,950; and
- an increase of 1.0% (+8,070 jobs) over the year from the revised September 2020 estimate of 771,400.
- Neither the quarterly nor the annual changes in employee jobs were statistically significant.

Employee jobs by sector

The seasonally adjusted quarterly change consisted of:

- increases in the services (+1.0% or +6,100 jobs) and manufacturing (+1.8% or +1,520 jobs) sectors;
- decreases in the other industries (-0.3% or -60 jobs) and construction (-0.1% or -40 jobs) sectors;
- an increase of 0.9% (+5,260 jobs) in the private sector; and
- an increase of 0.8% (+1,630 jobs) in the public sector.

Over the year to September 2021:

- increases were seen in the services (+1.2% or +7,630 jobs), manufacturing (+2.7% or +2,300 jobs), and other industries (+0.3% or +70 jobs) sectors;
- a decrease was seen in the construction (-5.4% or -1,930 jobs) sector;
- the private sector increased by 0.7% (+3,680 jobs); and
- the public sector increased by 2.0% (+4,300 jobs).

Private sector jobs increased both over the quarter (+0.9% or +5,260 jobs) and the year (+0.7% or +3,680 jobs). The annual increase in private sector jobs in September 2021 follows five previous consecutive quarters of annual decline.

Following a period of annual decline in public sector employee jobs between June 2015 and June 2017, since September 2017 there have been seventeen consecutive quarters of annual growth in public sector jobs to September 2021. There are 11,480 fewer public sector jobs (-5.0%) than the series peak in September 2009.

Further information is available on the [Quarterly Employment Survey page](#), whilst further breakdowns of employee jobs by geography and industry are available from the [Business Register and Employment Survey page](#).

Impact of COVID-19 on data collection and estimates

COVID-19 impacted on the data collection and the validation of employee jobs data, which are collected on the Quarterly Business Survey. As a result, the employee jobs estimates for 2020/21 may be subject to higher revisions than normal over the coming quarters. These can be tracked through the revisions triangle which is published alongside the QES publication on the [QES revisions page](#). Comparisons of employee jobs estimates at lower industry levels in particular (e.g. 2 digit Standard Industrial Classification level), should be treated with caution.

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, all businesses with more than one industry activity and a representative sample of smaller firms. 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.

4 Economic Inactivity

Updated December 2021

LFS economic inactivity

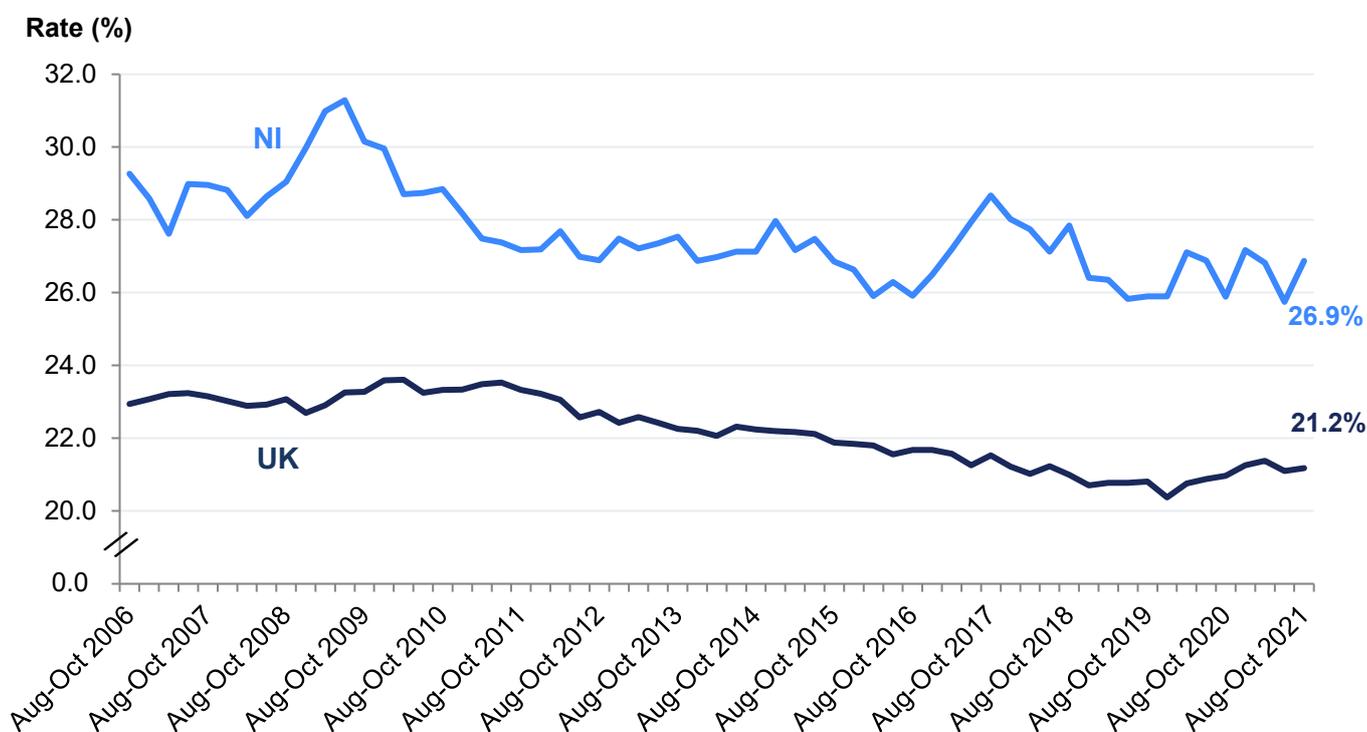
The Labour Force Survey (LFS) is a household sample survey carried out by interviewing individuals about their personal circumstances and work. It provides a rich source of information on the labour force using internationally agreed definitions. Estimates are subject to sampling error. (Please see section 5 and the [Estimating and Reporting Uncertainty](#) paper for more details on sampling error and survey methodology changes employed during the pandemic).

Economically inactive: People not in employment who have not been seeking work within the last 4 weeks and/or are unable to start work within the next 2 weeks.

Key Findings

- The economic inactivity rate increased over the quarter and over the year to 26.9%

Figure 11: Seasonally adjusted economic inactivity rates (16-64), Aug-Oct 2006 to Aug-Oct 2021



[Download Figure 11 data](#)

Figure 11 shows that, over the last 15 years, economic inactivity in NI has been consistently higher than the UK average. Economic inactivity peaked in NI during this time-period in 2009 at over 31%, compared to the peak in the UK rate of just under 24% at the beginning of 2010.

During the past 10 years, the UK inactivity rate has mostly been on a downward trend, although it has increased during the COVID-19 pandemic. While NI economic inactivity has been more variable, it also shows a trend of decreasing rates, albeit at a slower rate than UK economic inactivity. Over the last year, the economic inactivity rate has shown an increase in both the UK (+0.2pps) and Northern Ireland (+1.0pps), driven by an increase in male economic inactivity.

Economically inactive

The seasonally adjusted economic inactivity rate (aged 16-64) for August-October is estimated at 26.9%, which was:

- an increase of 1.1pps over the quarter;
- an increase of 1.0pps over the year.

Annual changes by sex:

- the male (16-64) economic inactivity rate (25.2%) increased by 2.7pps over the year; and
- the female (16-64) economic inactivity rate (28.5%) decreased by 0.7pps over the year.

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

[Economic Inactivity in Northern Ireland topic paper page](#)

[Women in Northern Ireland 2020 page](#)

5 Further Information

Updated December 2021

LFS unemployment

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

LFS employment

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

LFS economic inactivity

Economic inactivity is defined as those individuals who are neither in employment nor unemployed as determined by the ILO measure. The definition of economic inactivity is the percentage of all working age (16-64) people who are economically inactive.

Reporting Change and Sampling variability

Reported change is calculated using unrounded data and is 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. 'Over the quarter' refers to comparisons between the latest quarterly estimates for the period August-October 2021, and the quarter preceding that (i.e. May-July 2021). 'Over the year' refers to comparisons between the latest quarterly estimates for the period August-October 2021 and those of the corresponding quarter one year previously (i.e. August-October 2020).

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. Table 2 shows the sampling variability of the estimates, and quarterly and annual changes using 95% confidence intervals. We would expect that in 95% of samples the range would contain the true value. The final column contains the confidence interval that can be used when assessing change between two independent samples. Due to the LFS five wave structure, this means it can be used to assess changes over six quarters or more. The confidence intervals have been calculated using data that are not seasonally adjusted, with the relevant sampling errors produced then applied to the seasonally adjusted data.

If none of the reported changes over the year or the quarter were statistically significant, then the recorded changes did not exceed the variability expected from a sample survey of this size.

Table 2: Sampling variability of labour market estimates

August-October 2021	Estimate	Confidence interval: estimate	Change over quarter	Confidence interval: quarterly change	Change over year	Confidence interval: annual change	Confidence interval around change
Unemployment¹	32,000	+/-6,000	-4,000	+/-6,000	-2,000	+/-10,000	+/-10,000
Employment²	853,000	+/-20,000	-6,000	+/-18,000	-9,000	+/-30,000	+/-31,000
Economically inactive²	590,000	+/-19,000	11,000	+/-18,000	12,000	+/-29,000	+/-30,000
Unemployment rate¹	3.6%	+/-0.7pps	-0.4pps	+/-0.7pps	-0.2pps	+/-1.1pps	+/-1.2pps
Employment rate²	70.4%	+/-1.7pps	-0.8pps	+/-1.4pps	-0.8pps	+/-2.5pps	+/-2.6pps
Economic inactivity rate²	26.9%	+/-1.6pps	1.1pps	+/-1.4pps	1.0pps	+/-2.4pps	+/-2.5pps

[Download Table 2 data](#)

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

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

Response Rates – Updated quarterly (last updated 16/11/2021)

The total eligible sample for the July-September 2021 LFS consisted of 10,818 addresses (1,195 chosen at random from the Land and Property Services (LPS) list of domestic properties and 9,623 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.

Table 3: Response rates, July-September 2021

Fully and partially responding	2,591
Eligible sample	10,818
Response rate (%)	24.0%

*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.

LFS Comparisons

Estimates of employment, unemployment, and economic inactivity are derived from the LFS. The most robust estimates of short-term movements in these estimates are obtained by comparing the estimates over separate three-month periods. For example, estimates relating to August-October 2021 should be compared with the estimates for May-July 2021. This provides a more robust estimate than comparing with the estimates for July-September 2021, as the August and September data are included within both estimates. Effectively, observed differences are those between the individual months of July 2021 and October 2021. The LFS is sampled such that it is representative of the NI population over a three-month period, not for a single month period.

Seasonal adjustment

All estimates discussed in this Statistical Bulletin are seasonally adjusted unless 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. To compare over months or quarters, the data are seasonally adjusted to remove the effects of seasonal factors and the arrangement of the calendar.

Suppression and Shading

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

LFS revisions

LFS microdata are routinely revised to incorporate the latest population estimates.

In February 2019 revisions were published affecting LFS data from the period June-August 2011 to October-December 2018. Revisions arose from reweighting the data, including a boost to the sample size in January 2018 and a seasonal adjustment review. More information on the increased sample size is available in a separate paper on the background information page of the NISRA website.

In October 2020 the LFS estimates from January-March 2020 to May-July 2020 were revised to include additional factors in the weighting process. Please see the LFS revision note – October 2020 on the background information page of the NISRA website detailing the impact of the revisions.

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

Impact of COVID-19 on Labour Force Survey – field operations, imputation, population estimates

NISRA suspended all face to face household interviews in the middle of March 2020 due to COVID-19 and from April 2020 all LFS interviews were conducted by telephone. This change in mode for first interviews has resulted in a decrease in the response rate and changed the non-response bias of the survey. The reduction in achieved sample size, when compared with pre-pandemic levels, has decreased the precision of the estimates.

The proportion of households where people own their homes in the sample has increased whilst the proportion of rented accommodation households has decreased. As such, in October 2020 ONS revised the weighting methodology to include tenure type and provided a consistent reweighted time series back to January-March 2020.

In July 2021 the LFS from January 2020 was reweighted to take into account changes in the working population at UK level. More information on the changes can be found in the [Coronavirus and its impact on the labour force survey page](#) or in the [LFS Revision note](#) on the background information page of the NISRA website. The reweighted estimates for NI have not had the non-response bias adjustment fully applied. It is estimated that the impact on UK estimates would be less than 0.1 percentage points. ONS will continue to investigate this in the coming months. In addition there was a small error in the implementation of the reweighting methodology affecting all UK estimates. When calculating three-month averages for the PAYE real-time information (RTI) the previous three month averages were used. The impact of this time lag on LFS economic activity estimates at UK level is mostly below 0.1% and the impact on rates is less than 0.02 percentage points.

Temporary change in release time

Due to a change in ONS release and briefing practices in light of COVID-19, from April 2020 NISRA market sensitive statistics are released at 7am and not the standard release of 9.30am. NISRA requested the temporary change in time from the Office for Statistics Regulation. Correspondence between NISRA and OSR is available on the [OSR website](#), and more detail on the change in ONS practices is available on the [Changes to publication times for market-sensitive statistics page](#).

The OSR are carrying out a [review of the release time of official statistics](#). Comments are welcome and can be directed to the OSR by 21 December 2021 by emailing regulation@statistics.gov.uk.

Experimental Claimant Count (Jobseekers Allowance claimants plus some out-of-work Universal Credit claimants)

In March 2018, the NI JSA-only claimant count was replaced by an experimental measure based on JSA claimants plus out-of-work UC claimants who were claiming principally for the reason of being unemployed. The measure is categorised as experimental as the statistics are in the testing phase and not yet fully developed. ONS have produced a useful '[Guide to Experimental Statistics](#)' page and an FAQ document explaining the difference between the two measures is available on the [changes to the claimant count page](#) on the NISRA website.

Additional data tables are published on the [Claimant Count page](#) and counts are available from the [NOMIS](#) website.

Claimant count correction note

A number of claims across the UK to the UC element of the Claimant Count were coded to incorrect locations for data relating to December 2018 to November 2019. This has been corrected for December 2019 onwards, but previous periods remain affected. The impact of the revision on NI for December 2019 was an increase of fewer than 1,000 cases.

Claimant count revisions

Seasonally adjusted estimates are revised on a regular basis. Each month the previous estimate is revised in line with the current seasonal adjustment model, giving the best estimate of change for the latest period. During the Covid-19 outbreak the seasonal adjustment parameters for the Claimant Count will be under constant review and may result in revisions to the seasonally adjusted Claimant Count. The most recent longer-term revisions were published in April 2021 and related to figures from January 2017 to January 2021. Further details and previous seasonal adjustment revisions are available from the [changes to the claimant count page](#)⁵

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 required to notify the Department so there is likely to be an undercount.

To prevent the potential identification of individual businesses, redundancy totals relating to fewer than 3 businesses are not disclosed. The [Statistical Disclosure Control Policy](#) is available on the NISRA website. Where the number of businesses does not meet the threshold for release (as detailed in the Statistical Disclosure Control Policy), individual monthly totals are not published.

HMRC PAYE

Experimental Statistics on earnings and number of payrolled employees from HM Revenue and Customs' (HMRC's) Pay As You Earn (PAYE) Real Time Information (RTI) system are included in Section 3. HMRC PAYE RTI is the system employers use to take Income Tax and National Insurance contributions before they pay wages to employees. Data relate to employees paid by employers only, and do not include self-employment income or income from pensions, property rental or investments. Data are based on where employees live and not the location of their place of work within the UK. Data are seasonally adjusted but not adjusted for inflation. The HMRC PAYE covers the whole population rather than a sample of employees or companies. The data are classed as Experimental Statistics as the methodologies used to produce the statistics are still in their development phase. As a result, the series are subject to [revisions](#)⁵. Background information including the methodology used to compile the statistics, strengths and limitations and a comparison with other labour market sources is available on the [Earnings and employment from PAYE page](#)⁵ on the ONS website. Detail is also available [on the guide to experimental statistics page](#)⁵. A [comparison document](#) was released in November 2021 of earnings statistics from the Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings (ASHE) and HMRC Pay As You Earn (PAYE) Real Time Information (RTI).

Quarterly Employment Survey (QES)

All QES data contained in the LMR are adjusted for seasonality. The seasonally adjusted series started in 2005. Public sector and private sector series are seasonally adjusted separately to the industry breakdowns. As such, the two series may differ at the NI level.

QES Revisions

QES estimates are revised quarterly to reflect the latest information provided to the Department by employers. The June 2021 seasonally adjusted estimate first published in September 2021 has subsequently been revised up 0.04%. For further details, please see the [Quarterly Employment Survey revisions page](#)⁵.

The Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency wishes to thank the participating households and businesses for their co-operation in agreeing to take part in the surveys and for facilitating the collection of the relevant data.

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