

1 Overview of earnings

1.1 Median weekly earnings

The headline measure of earnings from the Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings (ASHE) is median gross weekly earnings for full-time employees. This is referred to throughout this section as “weekly earnings”. The mean is not used to summarise earnings as it is susceptible to small numbers of very high earners.

Gross weekly pay includes basic pay, overtime pay, commissions, shift premium pay, bonus or incentive pay and allowances, and is before deductions for PAYE, National Insurance, pension schemes, student loan repayments and voluntary deductions.

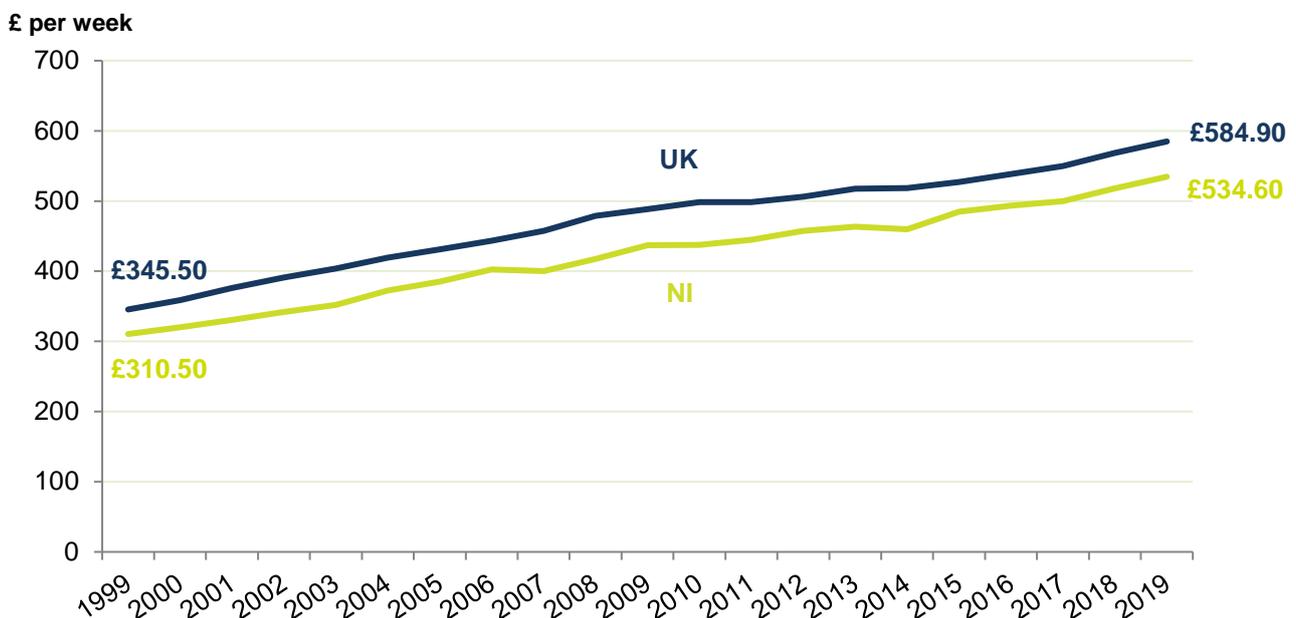
Median measures the amount earned by the average individual, i.e. the level of earnings at which half the population are above and half the population are below.

Full-time employee is defined as anyone aged 16 years or over that is directly paid from a business’s payroll for carrying out more than 30 paid hours per week (or 25 or more for the teaching professions).

Key findings

- Weekly earnings in NI increased by £16.80 (3.3%) over the year and by £16.60 (2.9%) in the UK

Figure 1: Median gross weekly earnings for full-time employees in NI and the UK, April 1999 to April 2019



Note: there were a number of methodological changes during the series in 2004, 2006 and 2011. See Section 4 Further information for full details.

[Download in excel](#)

Over the last 20 years, the median gross weekly earnings for full-time employees has increased by an average of £11 each year in NI. At April 2019, weekly earnings were £535. This was the second lowest of the 12 UK regions and £50 (8.6%) lower than the UK median (£585). Although NI weekly earnings increased by more (3.3%) than the equivalent UK median (2.9%), it had the joint third smallest increase of the UK regions over the year.

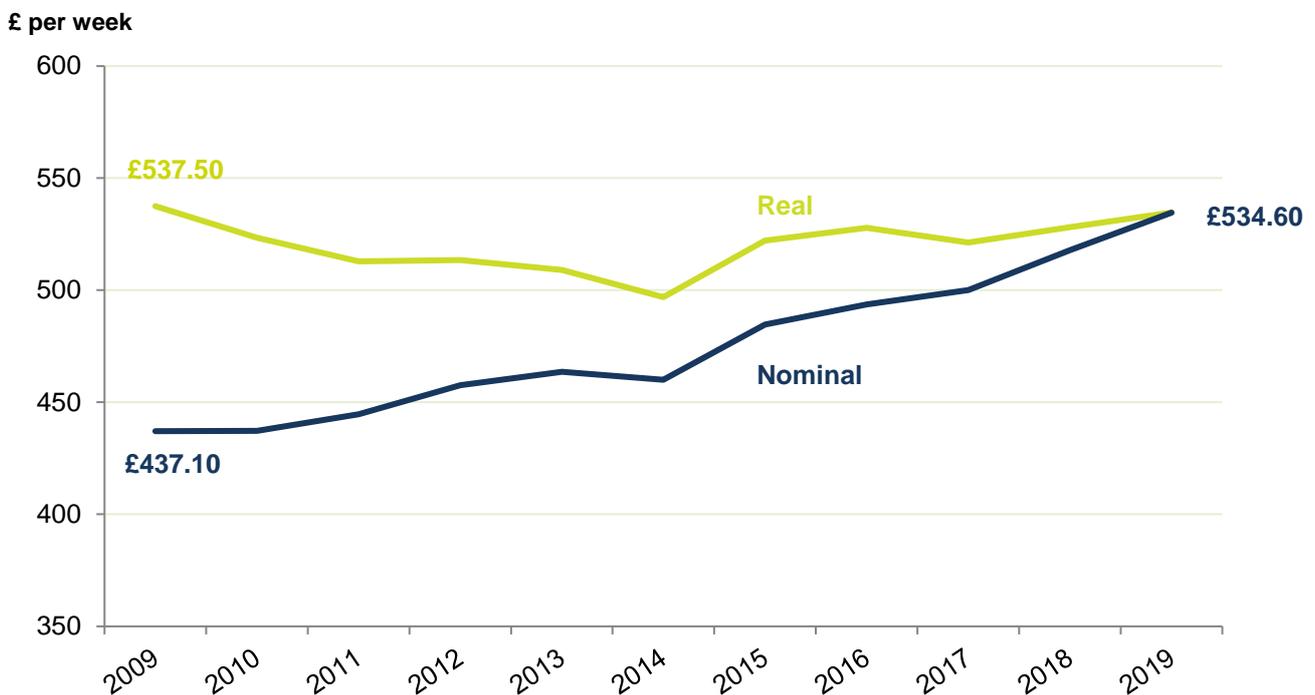
1.2 Real earnings

Real earnings are earnings with the effects of inflation removed. This provides a comparison of the amount of goods and services that can be bought over time (also known as purchasing power). An increase in real earnings means that earnings growth is above the rate of inflation. Real earnings are calculated by adjusting historic earnings data using the Consumer Price Index including owner occupiers' housing costs (CPIH).

Key findings

- Real earnings increased over the year (1.2%)
- Real earnings have almost returned to 2009 levels

Figure 2: Median gross weekly earnings for full-time employees in nominal and real (2019) terms, April 2009 to April 2019



Note: there was a methodological change during the series in 2011.
See Section 4 Further information for full details.
Non-zero axis

[Download in excel](#)

Figure 2 shows that, while nominal weekly earnings have increased each year since 2009 (with the exception of 2014), real earnings have not. Nominal weekly earnings in 2019 are approximately £100 more than in 2009, while real earnings differ by £3.

Over the year, real weekly earnings increased by 1.2%, similar to the increase of 1.3% recorded the previous year. This compares with an annual increase of 0.9% in the UK, following an increase of 1.1% over the year to 2018.

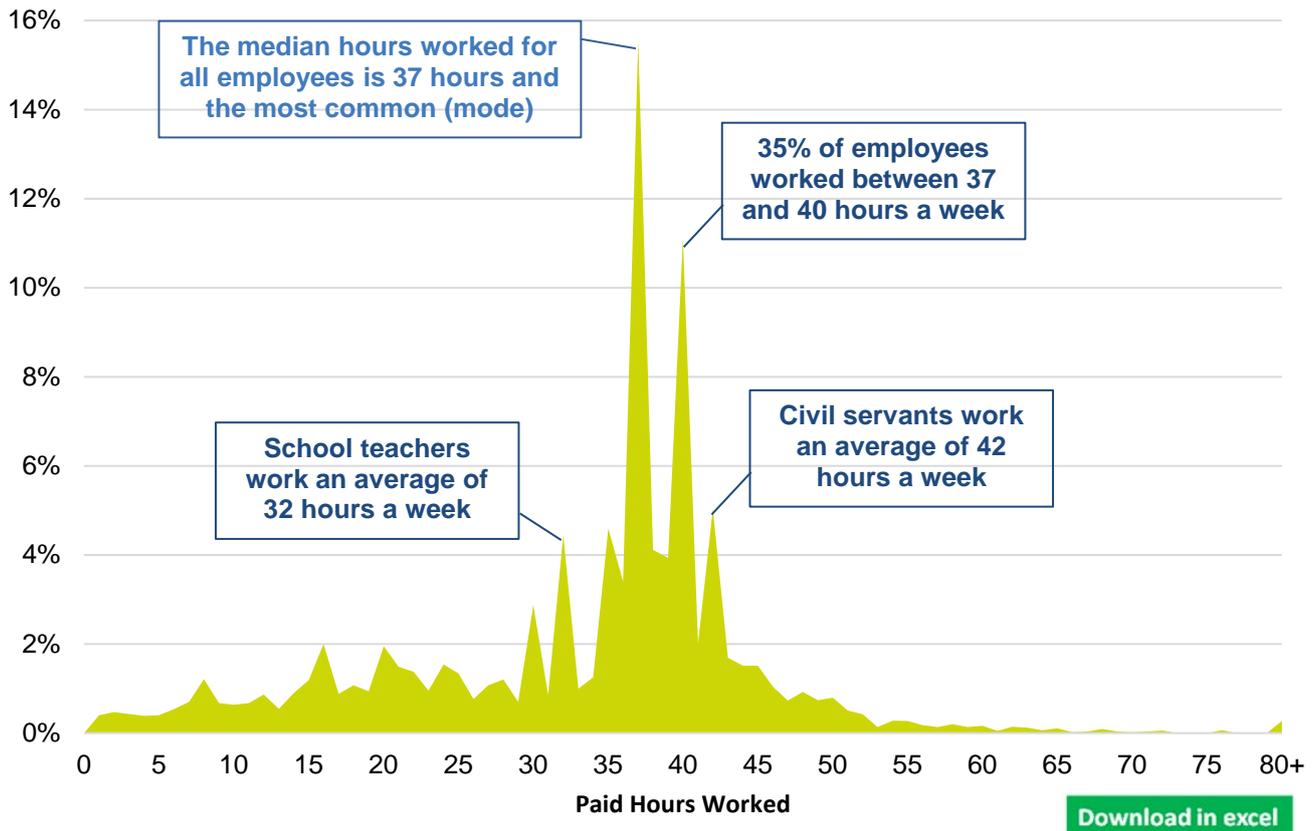
1.3 Paid hours

Total weekly paid hours worked is made up of paid basic hours and paid overtime hours. It is calculated using employees on adult rates whose pay was unaffected by absence.

Key findings

- Median weekly paid hours for all employees in NI and UK remained at 37 hours
- Full-time weekly paid hours was 0.7 hours greater in NI than the UK

Figure 3: Distribution of total weekly paid hours for all employees in NI, April 2019



In 2019, full-time employees in NI worked an average of 38.2 hours per week, compared to 37.5 hours in the UK. The median weekly paid hours worked has remained constant in the UK for full-time employees since 2004 (37.5 hours). It has been more varied for full-time employees in NI, ranging from a low of 37.5 hours in 2003 to a high of 38.9 hours in 2008.

When compared to the UK, the median paid hours was 0.7 hours higher for full-time employees in NI (38.2 hours compared with 37.5 hours), 0.8 hours higher for part-time employees (19.6 hours compared with 18.8 hours) and was the same for all employees in 2019 (37.0 hours).

Nearly 35% of employees worked between 37 and 40 hours per week, equivalent in hours to the standard '9 to 5'. Two clear peaks are evident at 37 hours and 40 hours for full-time employees while the working patterns of part time employees is more varied. The noticeable peak at 32 hours includes school teachers and at 42 hours includes NI civil servants.

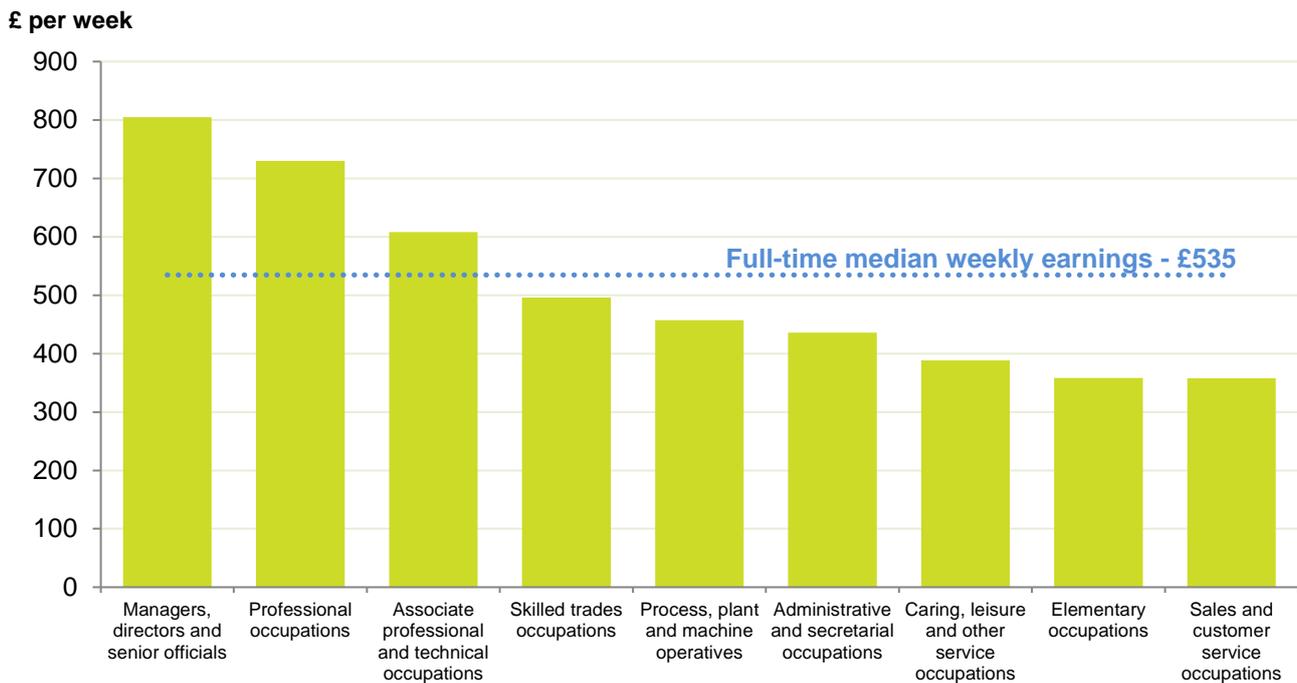
1.4 Earnings by occupation

Occupation: Results are collated using the 2010 Standard Occupation Classification (SOC10).

Key findings

- ‘Managers, directors and senior officials’ had the highest full-time weekly earnings
- ‘Sales and customer service occupations’ had the lowest full-time weekly earnings
- ‘Caring, leisure and other service occupations’ showed the largest increase in weekly earnings over the year

Figure 4: Median gross weekly earnings for full-time employees in NI by occupation, April 2019



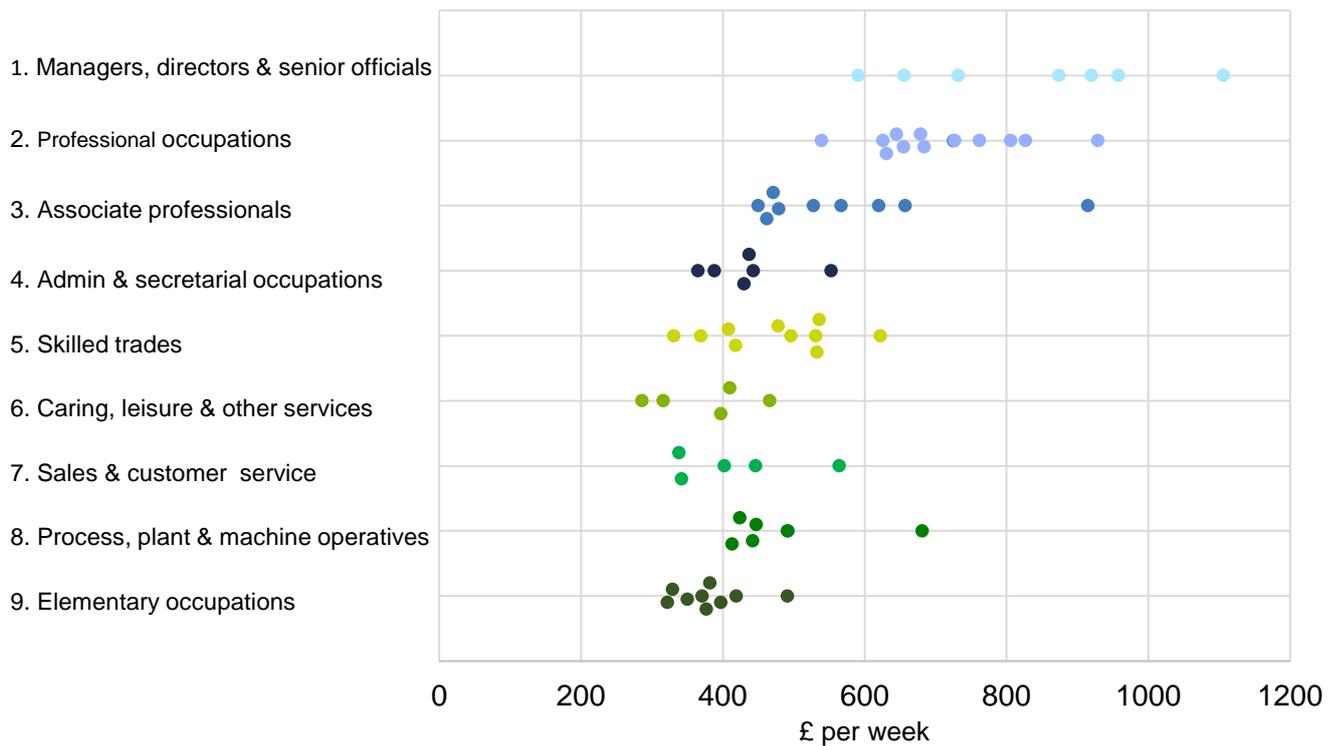
[Download in excel](#)

Analysis of full-time weekly earnings by occupation group shows that ‘Sales and customer service occupations’ (£358) remained the lowest paid occupational group, earning on average approximately £180 a week below the median for all full-time employees. ‘Managers, directors and senior officials’ (£805) remained the highest at £270 a week above the median for all full-time employees and more than double that of ‘Sales and customer service occupations’.

Weekly earnings increased in eight of the nine occupational groups over the year, the only decrease occurring in ‘Managers, directors and senior officials’ (£805), which decreased by £6 (0.8%). ‘Caring, leisure and other service occupations’ (£388) experienced the largest increase (£28 or 7.9%) in earnings between April 2018 and April 2019, followed by ‘Skilled trades occupations’ (5.5% to £496).

More detailed analysis on the earnings of 71 occupational groups (3-digit SOC10 codes) is presented in Figure 5. Please note, 19 occupation groups have been excluded from the chart due to small numbers.

Figure 5: Median gross weekly earnings for full-time employees in NI by occupation, April 2019



[Download in excel](#)

‘Managers, directors and senior officials’ had the widest range of earnings across the occupational groups. Weekly earnings ranged from £591 for ‘Managers and directors in retail and wholesale’, to £1,106 for ‘Senior officers in protective services’.

[An interactive version of this chart is available here.](#)

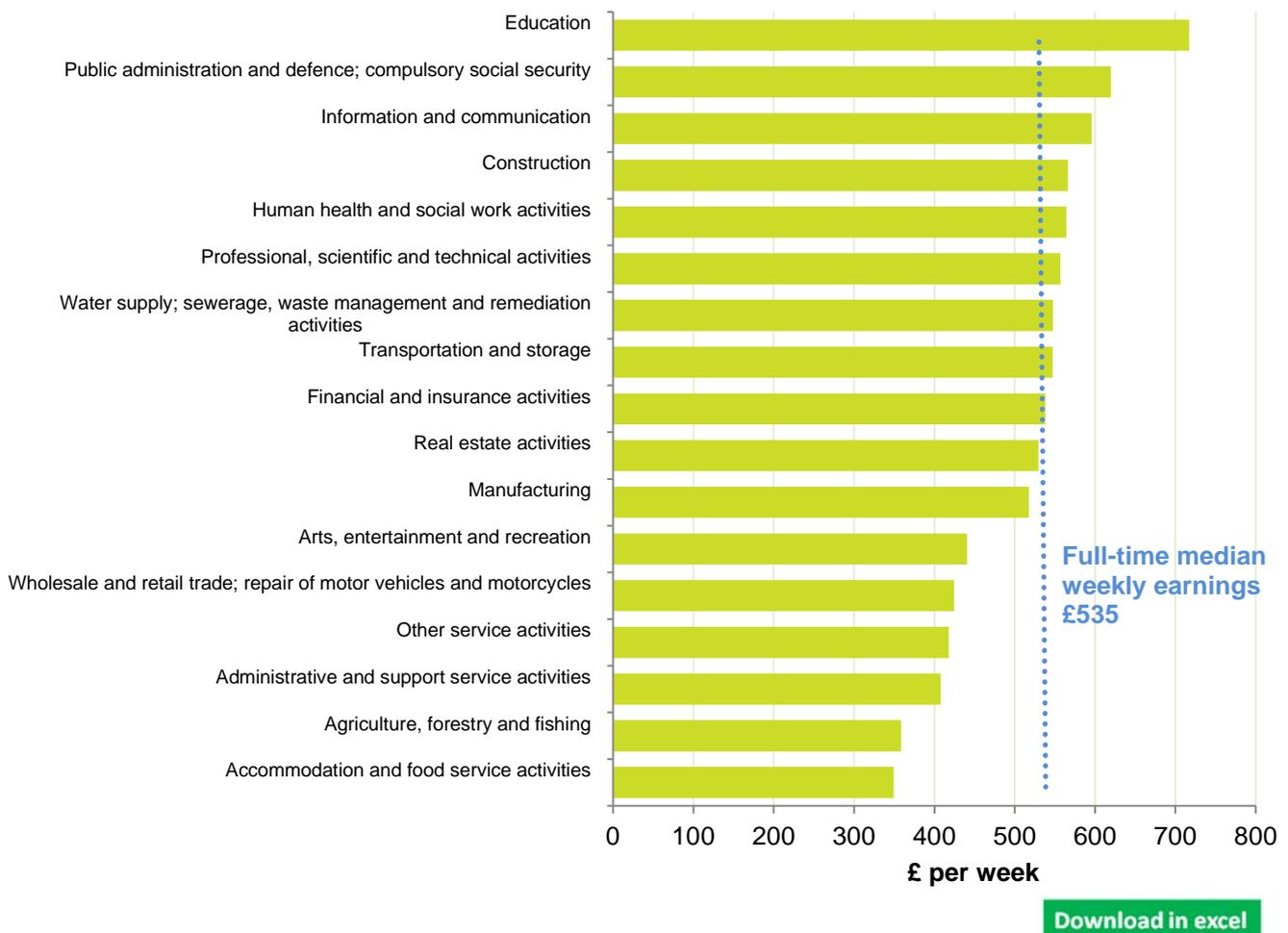
1.5 Earnings by industry

Industry: Results are collated using the 2007 Standard Industrial Classification (SIC07).

Key findings

- ‘Education’ had the highest full-time weekly earnings
- ‘Accommodation and food services activities’ had the lowest full-time weekly earnings
- Increases in full-time earnings were reported in the majority of industry sectors over the year (14 out of the 17 reported in the survey in both years¹)

Figure 6: Median gross weekly earnings for full-time employees in NI by industry, April 2019



In NI, weekly earnings for full-time employees at April 2019 were highest in ‘Education’ (£717) and lowest in ‘Accommodation and food service activities’ (£349). Increases were recorded in 14 of the 17 sectors that were reported for full-time employees¹. The largest increase (13.7%) was seen in ‘Real estate activities’ (£529), followed by ‘Construction’ (11.0% to £566), while the largest decrease (7.4%) was in ‘Water supply; sewerage, waste management and remediation activities’ (£548), followed by ‘Financial and insurance activities’ (7.3% to £538).

For information on the output of different NI industries, users may be interested in referring to results from the [Index of Production](#) and the [Index of Services](#) on the NISRA website.

¹ Full-time estimates were not published for 4 of the 21 industry sectors due to small sample sizes in those sectors.

1.6 Public/private sector comparison

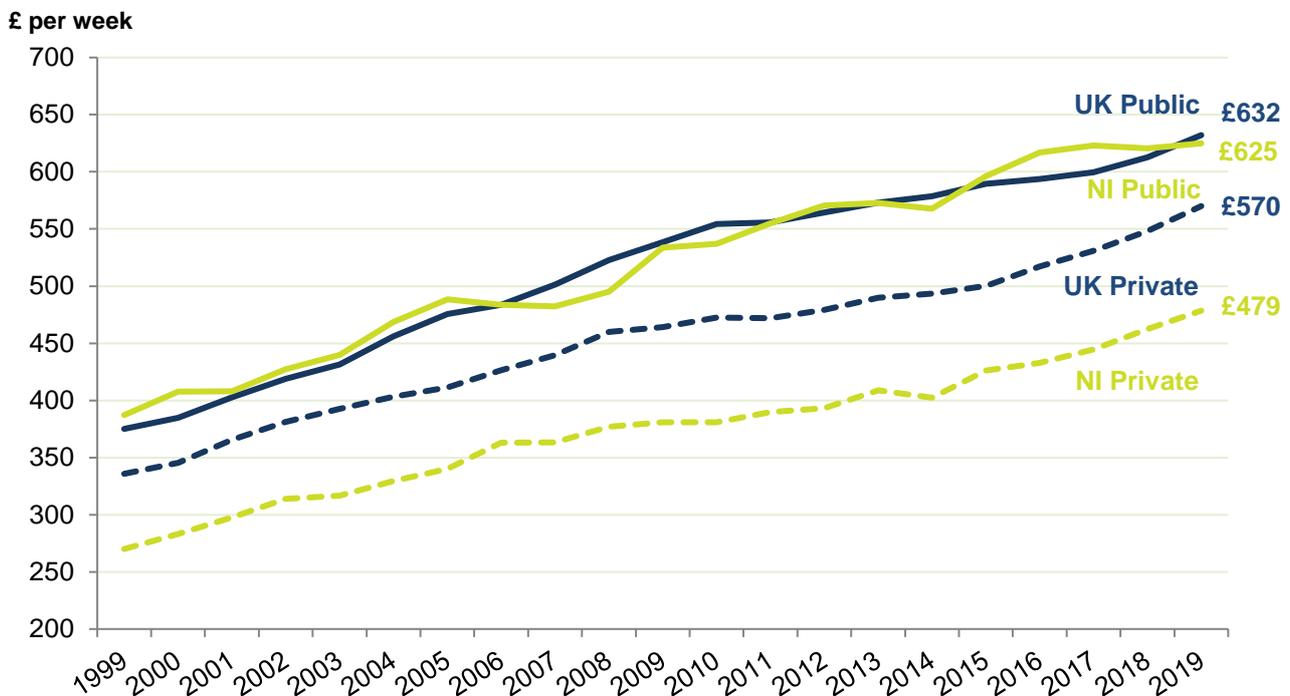
Public sector: The NI public sector can be broken down into five areas: NI central government; Bodies under aegis of NI central government; UK central government employees based in Northern Ireland; Local government; Public corporations.

Private sector: The private sector encompasses all for-profit businesses (that are not owned or operated by the government). This does not include any non-profit body or mutual association.

Key findings

- Median public sector earnings were almost a third higher than private sector earnings
- Larger increase in private sector full-time weekly earnings over the year than in the public sector

Figure 7: Median gross weekly earnings for full-time employees in NI and the UK in the public and private sectors, April 1999 to April 2019



Note: there were a number of methodological changes during the series in 2004, 2006 and 2011. See Section 4 Further information for full details.
Non-zero axis

[Download in excel](#)

Typically NI and UK median public sector earnings are within £20 of each other while private sector earnings differ to a greater extent. In 2019 NI public sector earnings were £7 lower than in the UK while earnings of private sector employees in NI were £92 lower than in the UK.

In April 2019 weekly earnings of public sector employees (£625) in NI were 30.6% higher than those for private sector employees (£479). In comparison, weekly earnings in the UK were 10.9% higher in the public sector (£632) than in the private sector (£570).

When public and private sector pay in NI and UK are considered, earnings for NI public sector employees had the lowest growth over the year. NI public sector pay increased by 0.7%, while in the

private sector, earnings increased more markedly at 3.4%. The UK increases were larger than those in NI, with increases of 3.2% in public sector and 4.0% in private sector earnings.

Increases were experienced right across the distribution of NI private sector employees. Those in the lowest 10% experienced an increase of 4.8%, a similar rate to those in the highest 10% (4.4%). Those in the lowest 10% of the public sector full-time weekly earnings distribution increased by 5.1%, but those in the highest 10% increased by much less at 0.6%.

When considering the hourly earnings of all employees (full-time and part-time combined), the lowest earning 10% of workers in the private sector (those at the 10th percentile) earned the same as the current National Living Wage (£8.21). In contrast, those at the 10th percentile of the public sector (£9.74) earned more per hour than those at the 40th percentile of the private sector (£9.44).

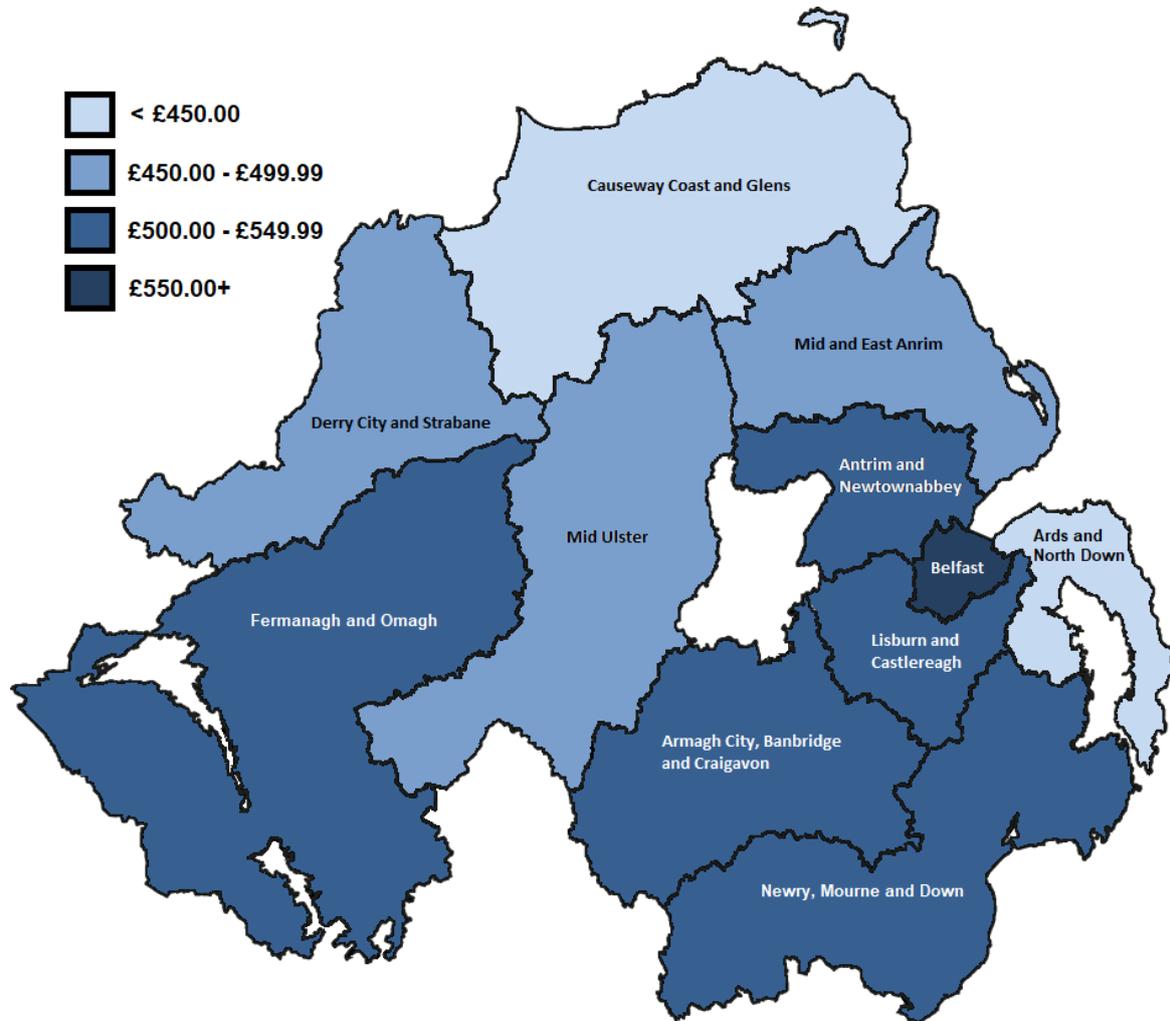
Please note, some of the difference between earnings in the public and private sectors may be due to differences in the composition of the respective workforces. For example, many of the lowest paid occupations exist primarily in the private sector, while there is a larger proportion of graduate-level and professional occupations in the public sector. Further detail on differences in the composition of the respective workforces is available at: [NI ASHE public and private sector analysis \(2013\)](#) and [Who works in the public sector?](#)

1.7 Earnings by Local Government District

Key findings

- Weekly earnings by place of work were highest in Belfast and lowest in Ards and North Down
- Ards and North Down was the only area where earnings decreased over the year

Figure 8: Median gross weekly earnings for full-time employees in NI by place of work, April 2019



© Crown copyright and database rights NIMA MOU207.2

[Download in excel](#)

In April 2019, full-time employees working in Belfast earned £575 on average per week. This is almost £130 more than the median weekly earnings for those in Ards and North Down (£447).

Ards and North Down had the lowest earnings of the local government districts and was the only district where earnings decreased over the year. The largest increase in earnings was in Fermanagh and Omagh, with an increase of £44 over the year (9.0%) to £532.

When earnings by place of residence are considered the ranking of LGDs changes, reflecting commuting patterns. Median weekly pay for full-time employees was highest for residents in Lisburn and Castlereagh (£591) and lowest for Causeway Coast and Glens (£483) residents.