

15th June 2021

Northern Ireland Quarterly Employment Survey

Theme: Labour Market

Frequency: Quarterly

Geographical area: Northern Ireland

Reference period: Quarter 1 (March) 2021

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 and covers all employers with 25 or more employees, all public sector employers, all businesses with more than one industry activity and a representative sample of smaller firms.

The survey date for Quarter 1 was 1st March 2021. Those who are furloughed under the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS) are included in employee jobs estimates.

All figures are adjusted for seasonality, unless stated otherwise.

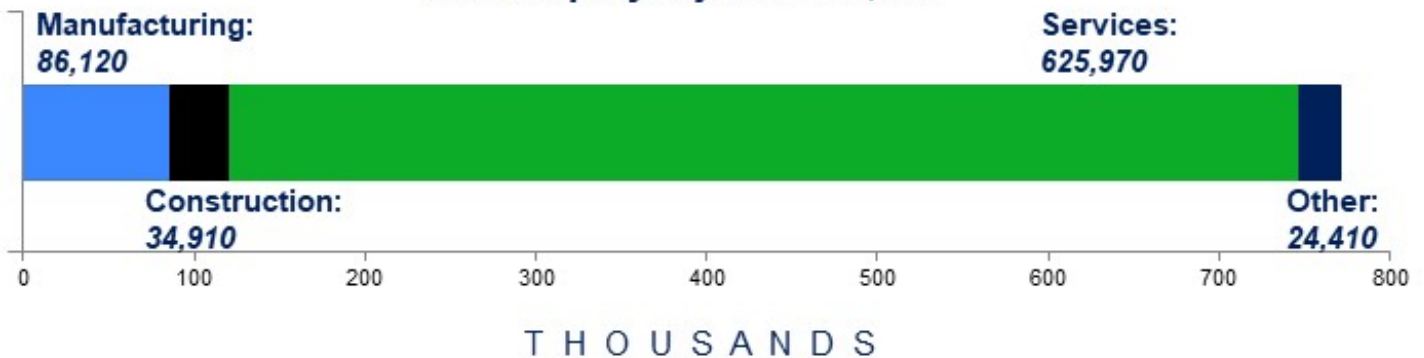
Key Points

- The number of employee jobs in March 2021 was estimated at 771,410. This was an increase of 2,020 jobs (+0.3%) over the quarter and a decrease of 7,290 jobs (-0.9%) over the year. Neither the quarterly nor the annual changes in employee jobs were found to be statistically significant.
- March 2021 marked the first quarterly increase in employee jobs since December 2019, following four consecutive quarters of decline. The first annual decline in employee jobs since 2012 was noted in September 2020 and since then there have been three consecutive quarters of annual decline.
- The annualised growth rate of total employee jobs has fallen every quarter between March 2018 (+2.3%) and March 2021 (-0.8%). March 2021 marked the second consecutive quarter of negative annualised growth since December 2012.
- In the last five years, employee jobs have increased by 5.5% (+40,380 jobs). There has been an increase of 11.6% (+80,120 jobs) from the low in March 2012.
- Quarterly increases in employee jobs were seen within the services (+2,240 jobs) and manufacturing (+280 jobs) industry sectors to March 2021. Both the construction and other industries sectors reported a decrease over the quarter (-700 jobs and -20 jobs respectively).
- All four broad industry sectors experienced decreases in employee jobs over the year to March 2021, with the services sector reporting the biggest annual decline (-5,860 jobs).
- Private sector jobs increased marginally over the quarter (+0.1% or +400 jobs) but decreased over the year (-1.6% or -9,260 jobs) to 557,390 jobs in March 2021. Public sector jobs increased over both the quarter (+0.3% or +600 jobs) and the year (+0.9% or +1,890 jobs) to 213,290 jobs in March 2021.

NISRA Labour Market Statistics

Quarterly Employment Survey – March 2021

Total employee jobs: 771,410



Change on quarter



Manufacturing
+0.3% (+280)



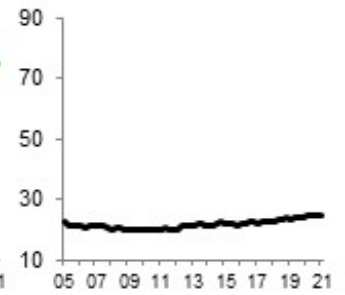
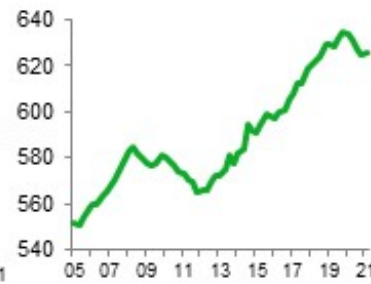
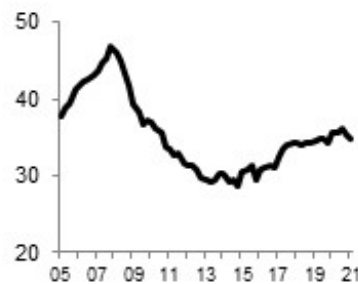
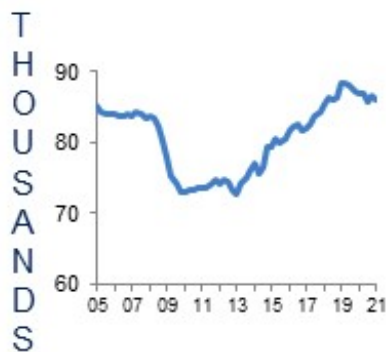
Construction
-0.9% (-330)



Services
+0.4% (+2,240)



Other
-0.7% (-170)



Change on year



Manufacturing
-0.8% (-710)



Construction
-2.0% (-700)



Services
-0.9% (-5,860)



Other
-0.1% (-20)

Northern Ireland employee jobs annual change by industry Q1 2020 - Q1 2021

Change by broad industry sector (seasonally adjusted)

Manufacturing



-0.8% (-710 jobs)
total jobs 86,120

Construction



-2.0% (-700 jobs)
total jobs 34,910

Services



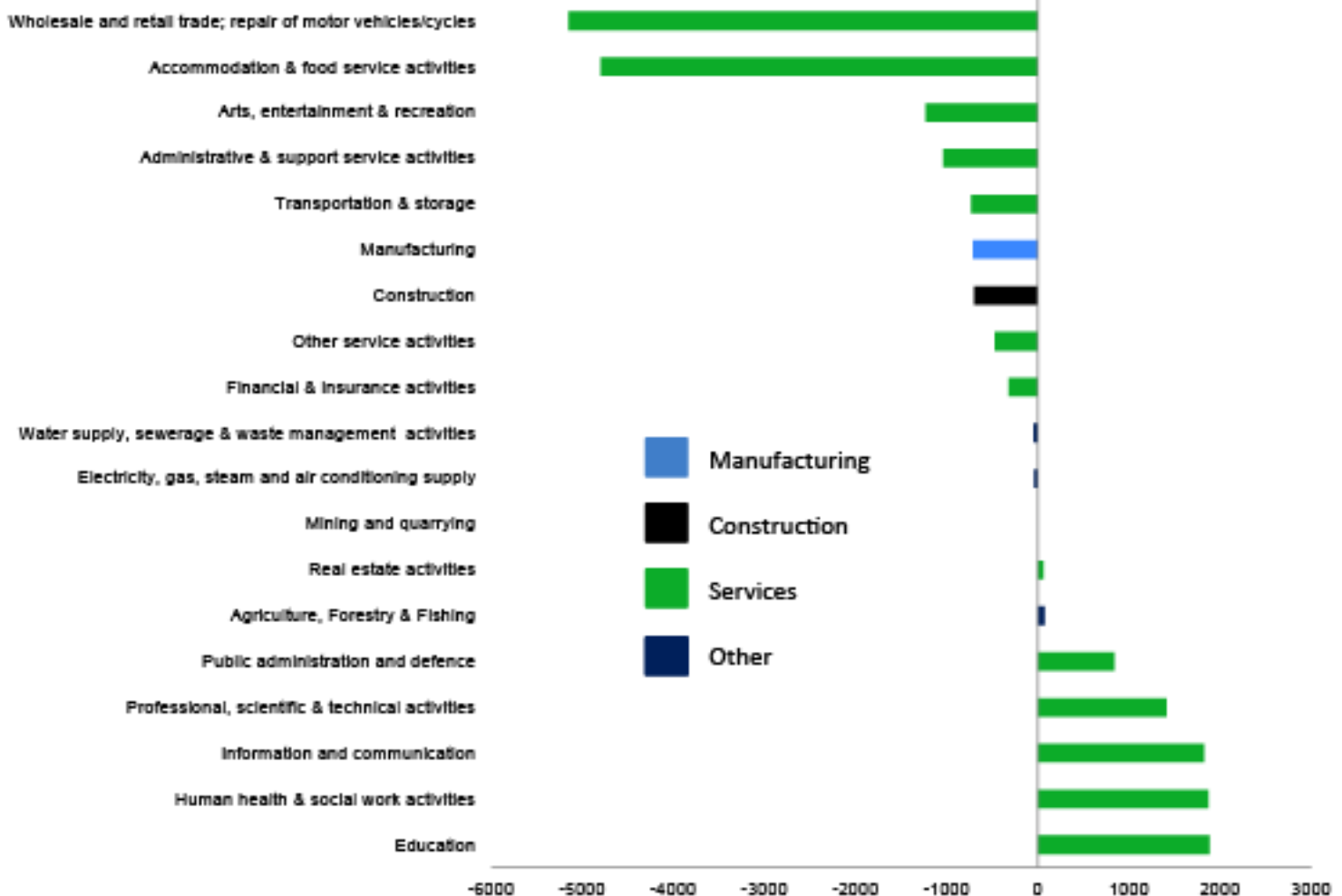
-0.9% (-5,860 jobs)
total jobs 625,970

Other



-0.1% (-20 jobs)
total jobs 24,410

Change by industry section (seasonally adjusted)



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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](#) against the [Code of Practice](#).

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:

- Quantified the level of uncertainty around estimates by providing confidence intervals for headline estimates;
- Removed pre-release access to enhance trustworthiness and also brought the publication date forward as a result;
- [Consulted users](#) at Labour Market User Groups and streamlined outputs in line with the UK series;
- Reduced [business burden](#) by offering the option of online data returns.
- Improved accessibility of Labour Market Statistics by [changing publication practices](#) so that reports are [no longer released on public holidays](#) and amended the format and structure of reports in line with accessibility regulations.
- Temporarily changed [timing of release](#) in line with change in ONS release practices in response to COVID-19.

1 Summary of Employee Jobs

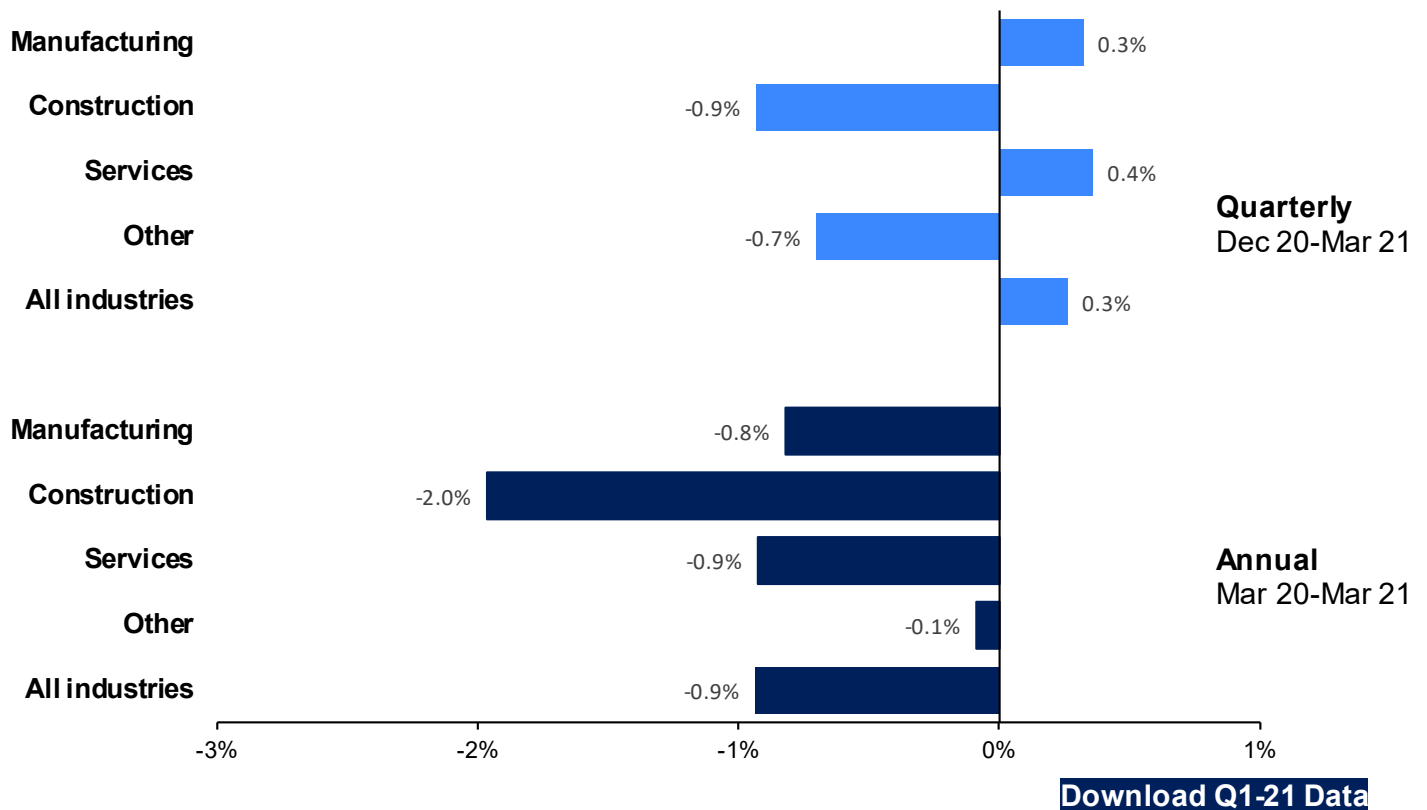
The survey date for Quarter 1 was 1st March 2021 for Northern Ireland (NI). Those who are furloughed under the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS) are included in employee jobs estimates.

Change in employee jobs

The seasonally adjusted employee jobs estimate for NI at March 2021 was 771,410 (+/- 5,460¹). This was:

- an increase of 0.3% (+2,020 jobs) over the quarter from the revised December 2020 estimate of 769,390.
- a decrease of 0.9% (-7,290 jobs) over the year from the revised March 2020 estimate of 778,710.
- Neither the quarterly nor the annual changes in employee jobs were found to be statistically significant.

Figure 1.1: Annual and Quarterly Changes in Employee Jobs at Section Level



Change over the quarter

Comparing seasonally adjusted March 2021 employee jobs to the revised December 2020 estimates showed:

- an increase in the services sector of 0.4% (+2,240 jobs) to 625,970 jobs.
- an increase in the manufacturing sector of 0.3% (+280 jobs) to 86,120 jobs.
- a decrease in the other industries sector of 0.7% (-170 jobs) to 24,410 jobs.
- a decrease in the construction sector of 0.9% (-330 jobs) to 34,910 jobs.

¹ Represents 95% confidence interval around estimate. More information is available in the [QES Confidence Intervals User Guidance PDF \(665KB\)](#).

Change over the year

Comparing seasonally adjusted March 2021 employee jobs to the revised March 2020 estimates showed:

- a decrease in the services sector of 0.9% (-5,860 jobs) to 625,970 jobs.
- a decrease in the manufacturing sector of 0.8% (-710 jobs) to 86,120 jobs.
- a decrease in the construction sector of 2.0% (-700 jobs) to 34,910 jobs.
- a decrease in the other industries sector of 0.1% (-20 jobs) to 24,410 jobs.

Comparing unadjusted data over the year, estimates showed:

- (i) Office administrative, office support and other business support activities; (ii) human health activities; and (iii) education saw the greatest increases over the year, accounting for almost half (49.0%) of all increases in employee jobs.
- (i) retail trade, except of motor vehicles and motorcycles; (ii) food and beverage service activities; and (iii) accommodation saw the greatest decreases over the year, accounting for 37.3% of all decreases in employee jobs.
- Despite the increases, there was a net decrease of 7,060 employee jobs.

Annualised change

Comparing the seasonally adjusted employee jobs data for Quarter 2 2019 – Quarter 1 2020 to Quarter 2 2020 – Quarter 1 2021 showed:

- an increase in the other industries sector of 2.0%.
- an increase in the construction sector of 1.6%.
- a decrease in the services sector of 0.9%.
- a decrease in the manufacturing sector of 1.8%.

Public / private sector changes

Seasonally adjusted employee jobs estimates for the public and private sectors at March 2021 showed:

- an increase of 0.3% (+600 jobs) in the public sector over the quarter and an increase of 0.9% (+1,890 jobs) over the year to 213,290 jobs.
- an increase of 0.1% (+400 jobs) in the private sector over the quarter and a decrease of 1.6% (-9,260 jobs) over the year to 557,390 jobs.

Commentary

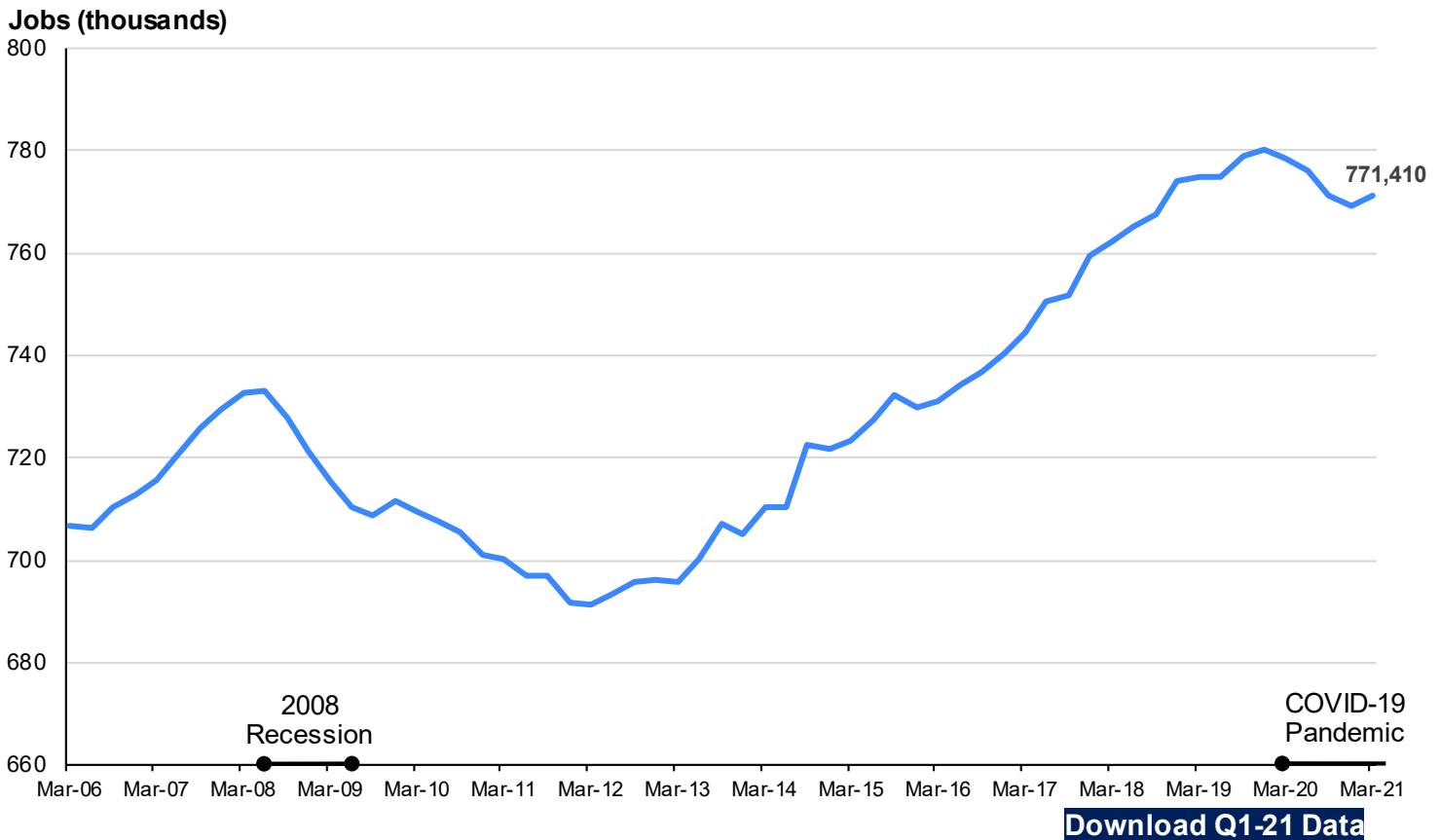
Preliminary estimates from the Quarterly Employment Survey (QES) show that Northern Ireland (seasonally adjusted) employee jobs increased (+0.3% or +2,020 jobs) over the quarter to 771,410 jobs in March 2021. This was the first quarterly increase since December 2019, following four quarters of decline.

The quarterly increase in employee jobs in March 2021 was largely driven by the services industry sector (+2,240 jobs), which had previously experienced four consecutive quarters of decline. A small quarterly increase in employee jobs was also seen in the manufacturing sector (+280 jobs). The construction and other industries sectors reported decreases in employee jobs over the quarter to March 2021 (-330 jobs and -170 jobs respectively).

Seasonally adjusted employee jobs decreased over the year to March 2021 (-0.9% or -7,290 jobs). This marks the third consecutive quarter of annual decline. Prior to September 2020, all quarters back to December 2012 had been experiencing annual growth. The annual decline in March 2021 was mainly driven by the services industry sector (-5,860 jobs).

March 2021 marked the second consecutive quarter of negative annualised growth (-0.8%) since December 2012.

Figure 1.2: Seasonally Adjusted Jobs in NI, March 2006 – March 2021



Public sector jobs increased over both the quarter (+0.3% or +600 jobs) and the year (+0.9% or +1,890 jobs). Public sector jobs have been on a gradually increasing trend since September 2016, although they are still 6.5% (-14,900 jobs) lower than the series peak in September 2009. Private sector jobs increased marginally over the quarter (+0.1% or +400 jobs) but decreased over the year (-1.6% or -9,260 jobs). March 2021 marked the first quarterly increase in private sector jobs following five consecutive quarter of decline.

The UK also reported an increase in employee jobs over the quarter (+0.4%) and a decrease over the year (-2.4%) to 30.16 million jobs in March 2021.

Context

This bulletin presents data from the Northern Ireland Quarterly Employment Survey (QES), which is conducted by the Economic & Labour Market Statistics (ELMS) Branch of the Northern Ireland Statistics & Research Agency (NISRA).

The survey date for Quarter 1 was 1st March 2021 for Northern Ireland. Those who are furloughed under the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS) are included in employee jobs 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, recent employee jobs may be subject to higher revisions than normal over the coming quarters. These can be tracked through the revisions triangle on the [Quarterly Employment Survey Revisions page](#). Comparisons of provisional employee jobs estimates at lower industry levels in particular (e.g. 2 digit Standard Industrial Classification level), should be treated with caution.

The QES provides short-term employee jobs estimates for Northern Ireland and covers all employers with 25 or more employees, all public sector employers, all businesses with more than one industry activity and a representative sample of smaller firms. As it is a sample survey, estimates are subject to sampling variability.

The QES excludes the self-employed, HM Armed Forces, private domestic servants, homeworkers and Training for Success trainees without a contract of employment (non-employed status). The survey collects information on the number of males/females in full-time and part-time employment by business activity and the results are collated into industry classes using the 2007 Standard Industrial Classification (SIC07). The number of jobs are counted rather than the number of persons with jobs. For example, a person holding both a full-time job and part-time job, or someone with two part-time jobs, will be counted twice.

All figures included in the QES are adjusted for seasonality, unless stated otherwise, where the seasonally adjusted series started in 2005.

Figures from the QES are included in the [Labour Market Report](#) alongside figures from the Labour Force Survey (LFS), the Claimant Count, the Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings (ASHE) and redundancies data.

QES employee jobs are also a component of the Office for National Statistics (ONS) quarterly [workforce jobs estimates](#) for the UK.

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

Results are provisional and subject to revisions as more up-to-date data becomes available (e.g. through late returns). Figures can also change as a result of the seasonal adjustment process, methodological changes or changes to classifications. Further information is available from the [Quarterly Employment Survey Revisions page](#).

Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS)

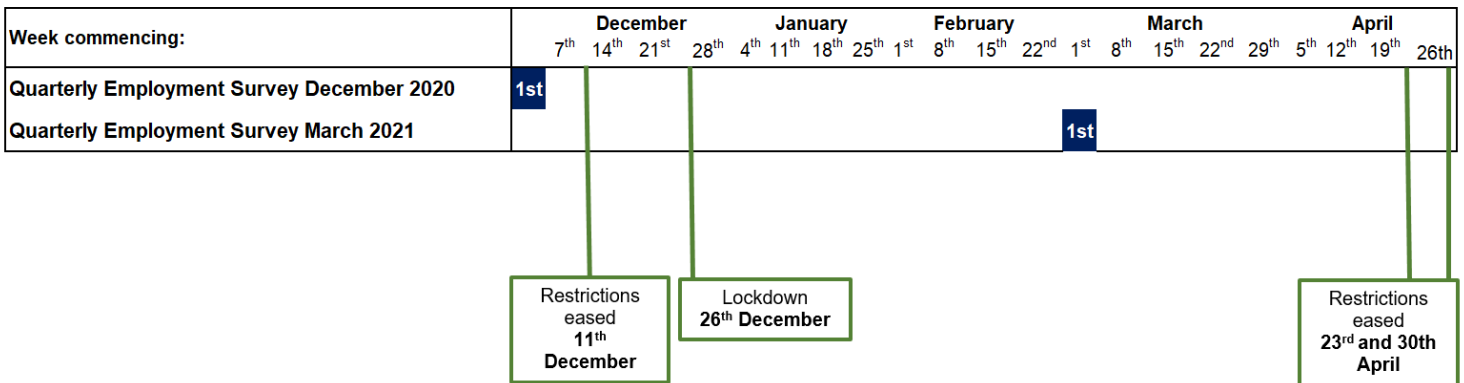
The CJRS (“furlough scheme”) was introduced from 1st March 2020 to support individuals and businesses impacted by disruption caused by the coronavirus pandemic. Up to 30th June 2020, CJRS provided employers with financial support of up to 80% of their employees’ salaries (capped at £2,500 per month per employee). Changes to the scheme from the start of August, September and October gradually reduced the total level of support available for each furloughed employee up to the end of October. The government has announced an extension to CJRS to support individuals and businesses who are impacted by disruption caused by coronavirus until 30th September 2021.

The QES employee jobs estimates include those who are furloughed under the CJRS. Experimental statistics on the CJRS are produced by HMRC, where those receiving CJRS are referred to as ‘employments’. HMRC publishes data on the number of CJRS claims made as at the end of each calendar month; as a result, this data is not directly comparable to the QES estimates which measure the number of jobs on a particular day each quarter (1st March 2021 for Quarter 1 2021).

However, the latest preliminary HMRC [Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme Statistics: June 2021](#) showed:

- on 31 March 2021, the number of employments on furlough in Northern Ireland was 102,200. Provisional figures show that the number of employments on furlough in Northern Ireland decreased to 90,000 at 30 April 2021, following the easing of some restrictions in April 2021.
- at 31st March 2021, half of the furloughed employments in Northern Ireland were in Wholesale and retail; repair of motor vehicles (25,190 furloughed employments) and accommodation and food services (24,390 furloughed employments).

Data source reference periods and key dates



2 NI Employee Jobs

Employee: 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. The QES counts the number of jobs rather than the number of persons with jobs. Those who are furloughed under the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS) are included in estimates.

Key Findings:

- Employee jobs increased over the quarter by 0.3% (+2,020 jobs) but decreased over the year by 0.9% (-7,290 jobs) to 771,410 in March 2021.
- The annualised growth rate¹ of total employee jobs has fallen every quarter between March 2018 (2.3%) and March 2021 (-0.8%). March 2021 marked the second consecutive quarter of negative annualised growth since December 2012.

Figure 2.1: Index of Employee Jobs, March 2006 – March 2021

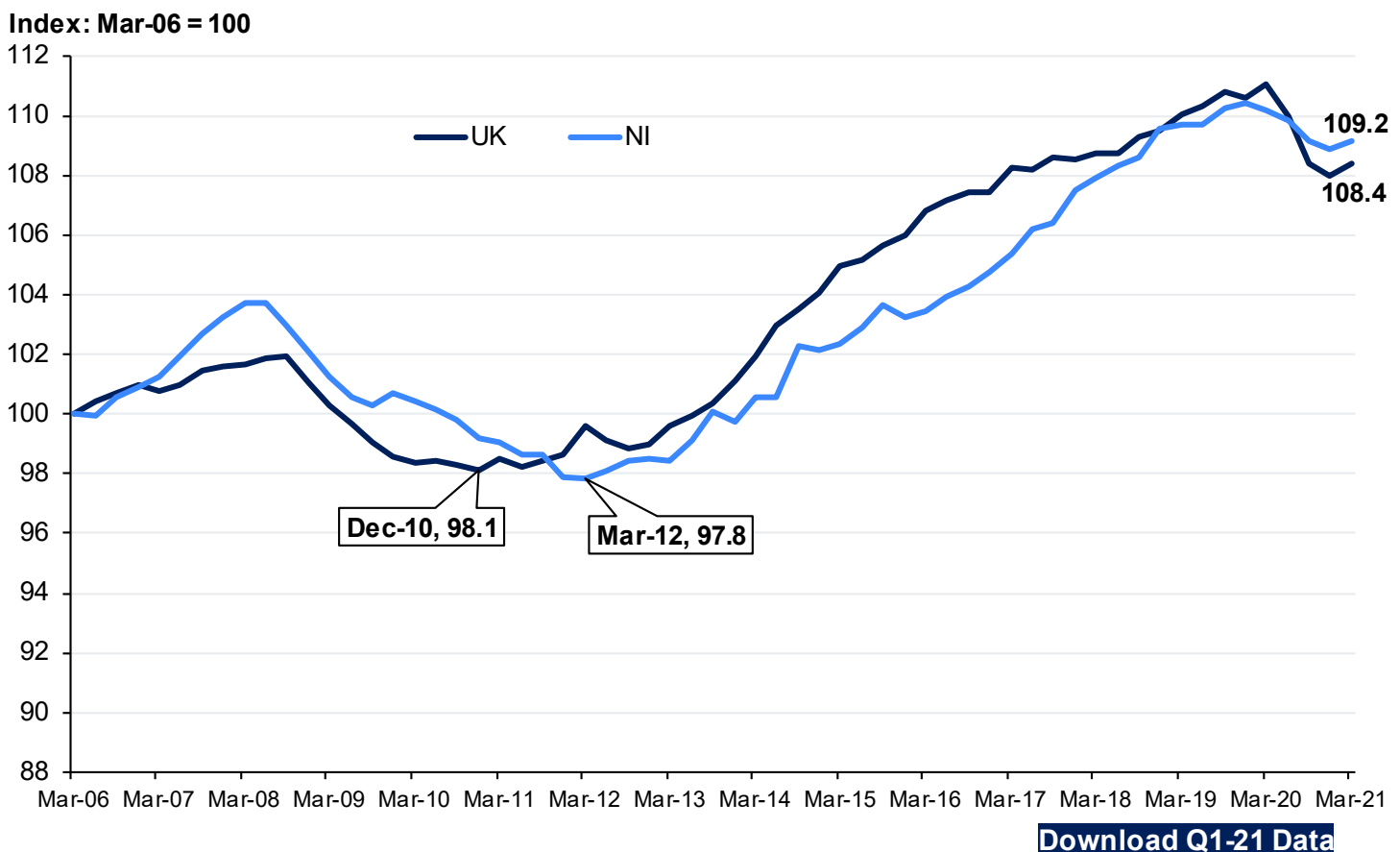


Figure 2.1 shows estimated seasonally adjusted employee jobs, indexed to allow comparison between NI and the UK. In NI, the annualised growth rate has fallen every quarter between March 2018 (2.3%) and March 2021 (-0.8%). March 2021 marked the second consecutive quarter of negative annualised growth since December 2012. The decline in NI employee jobs over the year (-0.9%) is the third consecutive quarter of annual decline. The UK reported a larger fall in employee jobs (-2.4%) over the year. Prior to the 2008 downturn, the peak for NI was in June 2008, and was in September 2008 for the UK. Following these respective peaks, the UK reached its lowest point in December 2010, more than a year before the NI low in March 2012. NI jobs are now 5.3% above their June 2008 level while UK jobs are 6.3% above their September 2008 level.

¹Annualised growth is calculated as the difference in the average of the most recent 4 quarters and the previous 4 quarters average, as a proportion of the average of the previous 4 quarters. See Section 6 for further information.

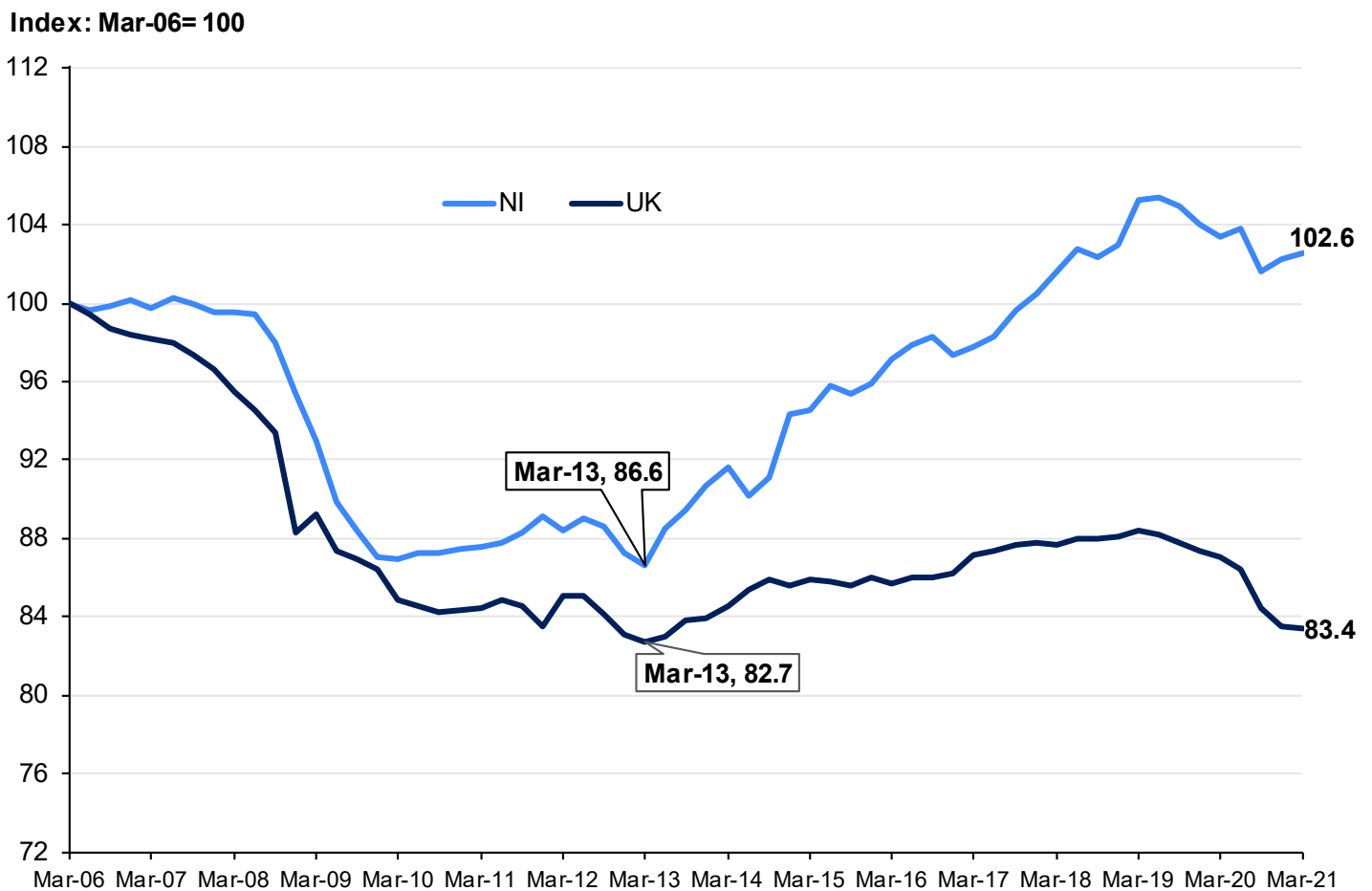
Manufacturing sector

Manufacturing sector: contains businesses which produce merchandise for use or sale. It also contains businesses with activity of printing and reproduction of recorded media and businesses that repair and install machinery and equipment. Manufacturing is part of the broader production sector.

Key Findings:

- The manufacturing sector accounted for 11.2% of all employee jobs in March 2021.
- Seasonally adjusted figures showed an increase of 0.3% over the quarter and a decrease of 0.8% over the year to 86,120 manufacturing jobs in March 2021.

Figure 2.2: Index of manufacturing employee jobs, March 2006 – March 2021



[Download Q1-21 Data](#)

Manufacturing jobs in NI experienced a small increase over the quarter to March 2021 (+0.3% or +280 jobs). Both NI and the UK reached a series low in March 2013. Manufacturing jobs in NI remain 18.4% (+13,390 jobs) above the March 2013 low point, however they are 2.7% (-2,360 jobs) lower than the series peak in June 2019. The UK has experienced eight consecutive quarters of decline in manufacturing jobs to March 2021.

Key Findings

Seasonally adjusted data showed that the manufacturing sector increased by 0.3% (+280 jobs) over the quarter and decreased by 0.8% (-710 jobs) over the year to 86,120 jobs.

The following breakdowns are based on 2 digit SIC manufacturing data that have not been adjusted for seasonality. Please note that estimates at 2 digit SIC can fluctuate due to sampling variability and changes to industrial classification.

Changes over the year

Over the year to March 2021 the unadjusted figures showed a decrease of 0.8% (-710 jobs) in the manufacturing sector. The 3 largest contributors to this decrease were:

- a decrease of 20.6% (-1,450 jobs) in manufacture of other transport equipment.
- a decrease of 8.4% (-380 jobs) in manufacture of computer, electronic and optical products.
- a decrease of 1.9% (-140 jobs) in manufacture of machinery and equipment n.e.c (not elsewhere classified).

The overall decrease was partially offset by some increases in manufacturing subsectors; the 3 largest increases over the year being:

- an increase of 55.0% (+1,020 jobs) in manufacture of chemicals and chemical products.
- an increase of 4.3% (+210 jobs) in manufacture of other non-metallic mineral products.
- an increase of 6.1% (+170 jobs) in manufacture of basic pharmaceutical products and pharmaceutical preparations.

For figures broken down by 2 digit SIC please see table 5.10 on the NISRA - [Economic and Labour Market Statistics website](#).

When using table 5.10 please consider the notes on 'Using 2 Digit SIC Level Data' in section 6 – Further Info.

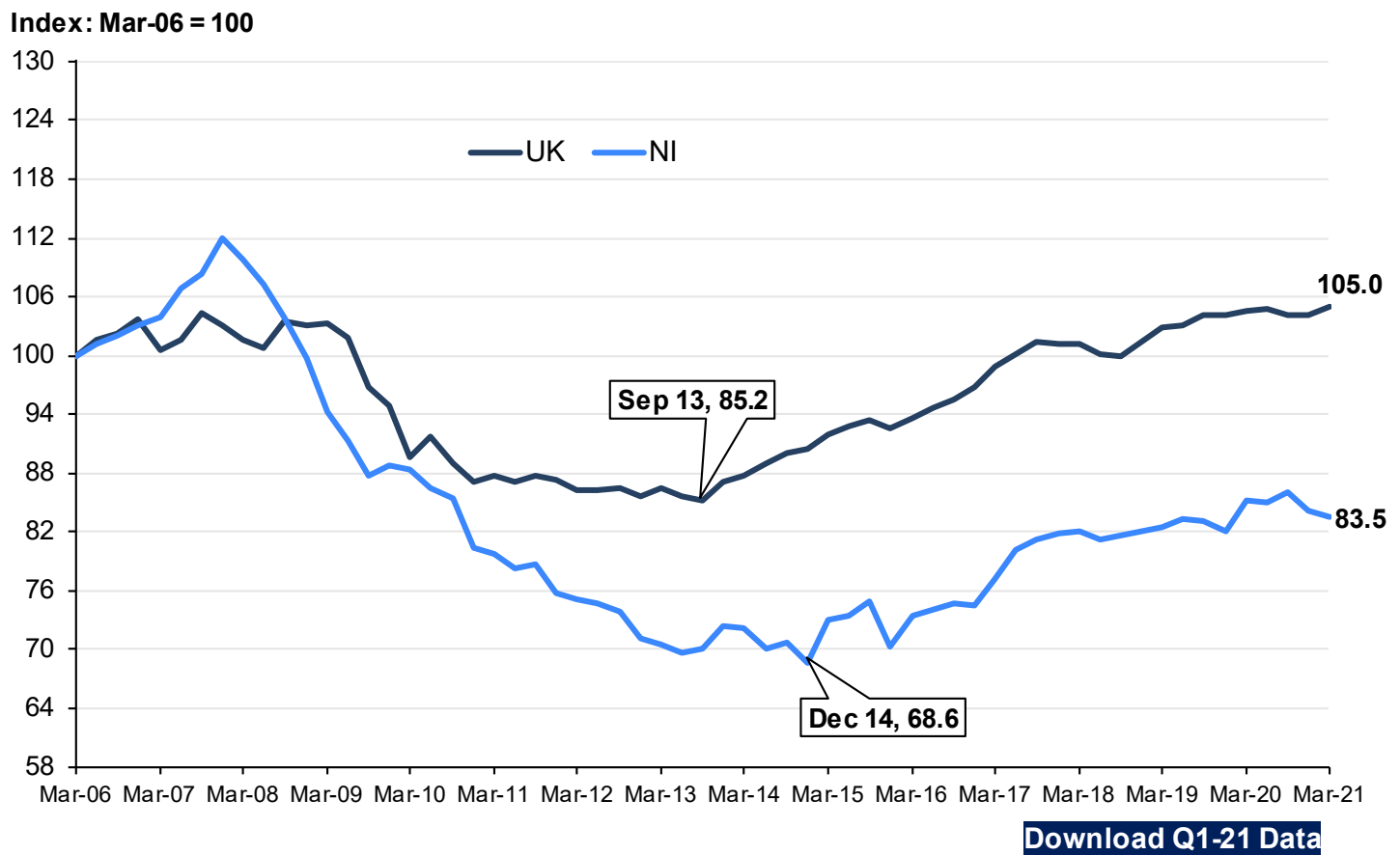
Construction sector

Construction sector: construction is the process of creating and building infrastructure or a facility. It differs from manufacturing in that manufacturing typically involves mass production of similar items without a designated purchaser and construction is typically done on location for a known client. The construction sector consists of businesses with activity in the construction of buildings, civil engineering or specialised construction activities.

Key Findings:

- The construction sector accounted for 4.5% of all employee jobs in March 2021.
- Seasonally adjusted figures showed a decrease of 0.9% over the quarter and a decrease of 2.0% over the year to 34,910 jobs in March 2021.

Figure 2.3: Index of construction employee jobs, March 2006 – March 2021



The most recent series low in the construction sector for NI was in December 2014 (28,710 jobs). The latest estimates show a 21.6% improvement on this level; however the number of employee jobs in the construction sector is currently 25.5% lower than the series peak in December 2007. Most recent estimates show that the UK construction sector reached the series peak in March 2021 and is now 23.2% above the series low in September 2013.

Key Findings

Seasonally adjusted data showed that the construction sector decreased by 0.9% (-330 jobs) over the quarter and decreased by 2.0% (-700 jobs) over the year to 34,910 jobs in March 2021.

The following breakdowns are based on 2 digit SIC construction data that have not been adjusted for seasonality. Please note that estimates at 2 digit SIC can fluctuate due to sampling variability and changes to industrial classification.

Changes over the year

Over the year to March 2021 the unadjusted figures showed a decrease of 1.9% (-690 jobs) in the construction sector.

The following changes occurred over the year:

- an increase of 1.4% (+120 jobs) in civil engineering
- a decrease of 0.4% (-30 jobs) in construction of buildings.
- a decrease of 4.2% (-780 jobs) in specialised construction activities.

For figures broken down by 2 digit SIC please see table 5.10 on the NISRA - [Economic and Labour Market Statistics website](#).

When using table 5.10 please consider the notes on 'Using 2 Digit SIC Level Data' in section 6 – Further Info.

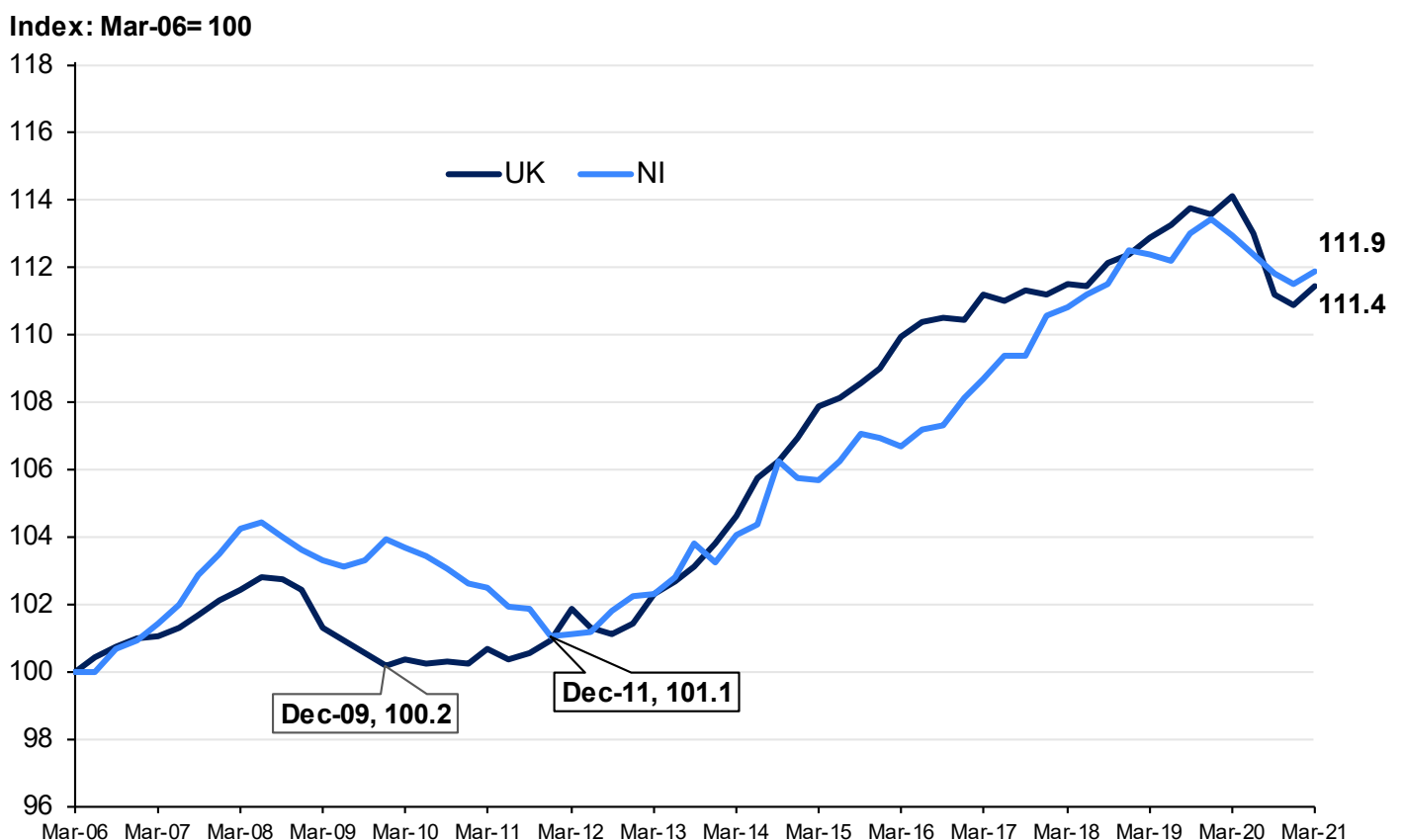
Services sector

Services sector: the services sector contains businesses which sell services and skills; and includes education, public administration and health and social work activities. A full list of the industry sections G-S which are included in the services sector can be found in table 5.5 within the supplementary tables on the [Economic and Labour Market Statistics website](#).

Key Findings:

- Seasonally adjusted figures showed an increase of 0.4% over the quarter and a decrease of 0.9% over the year to 625,970 service sector jobs in March 2021.
- Services sector jobs reached a peak in December 2019, however there has been a 1.4% decrease (-8,590 jobs) since this point to March 2021.
- The services sector accounted for 81.1% of all employee jobs in Northern Ireland in March 2021.

Figure 2.4: Index of services employee jobs, March 2006 - March 2021



[Download Q1-21 Data](#)

Following four previous consecutive quarters of decline, services jobs in NI experienced an increase over the quarter to March 2021 (+0.4% or +2,240 jobs). The number of employee jobs in the NI services sector has increased by 29,170 over the last 5 years and reached a peak in December 2019. There has been an increase of 10.7% in employee jobs in the services sector since the low in December 2011.

The UK also experienced an increase (+0.5%) in service sector jobs over the quarter to March 2021.

Key Findings

Seasonally adjusted data showed that the services sector increased by 0.4% (+2,240 jobs) over the quarter and decreased by 0.9% (-5,860 jobs) over the year to 625,970 jobs in March 2021.

The wholesale and retail trade (section G); and human health and social work activities (section Q) services sections are the two largest industry sections of the NI economy, accounting for a third of all employee jobs in March 2021 (33.3% or 256,880 jobs).

- Wholesale and retail trade: 124,780 jobs in March 2021, representing an annual decrease of 4.0% or 5,150 jobs.
- Human health and social work activities: 132,100 jobs in March 2021, representing an annual increase of 1.4% or 1,870 jobs.

For figures for all services industry sections (G-S), please see table 5.5b within the supplementary tables on the NISRA - [Economic and Labour Market Statistics website](#).

The following breakdowns are based on 2 digit SIC services data that have not been adjusted for seasonality. Please note that estimates at 2 digit SIC can fluctuate due to sampling variability and changes to industrial classification.

Changes over the year

Over the year to March 2021 the unadjusted figures showed a decrease of 0.9% (-5,640 jobs) in the services sector. The 3 largest contributors to this decrease over the year were:

- a decrease of 3.1% (-2,700 jobs) in retail trade, except of motor vehicles and motorcycles.
- a decrease of 6.7% (-2,660 jobs) in food and beverage service activities.
- a decrease of 19.3% (-2,170 jobs) in accommodation.

The overall decrease was partially offset by some increases in services subsectors, the 3 largest increases over the year being:

- an increase of 24.6% (+2,570 jobs) in office administrative, office support and other business support activities.
- an increase of 2.8% (+2,000 jobs) in human health activities.
- an increase of 2.6% (+1,870 jobs) in education.

For figures broken down by 2 digit SIC please see table 5.10 on the NISRA - [Economic and Labour Market Statistics website](#).

When using table 5.10 please consider the notes on 'Using 2 Digit SIC Level Data' in section 6 – Further Info.

Other industries sector

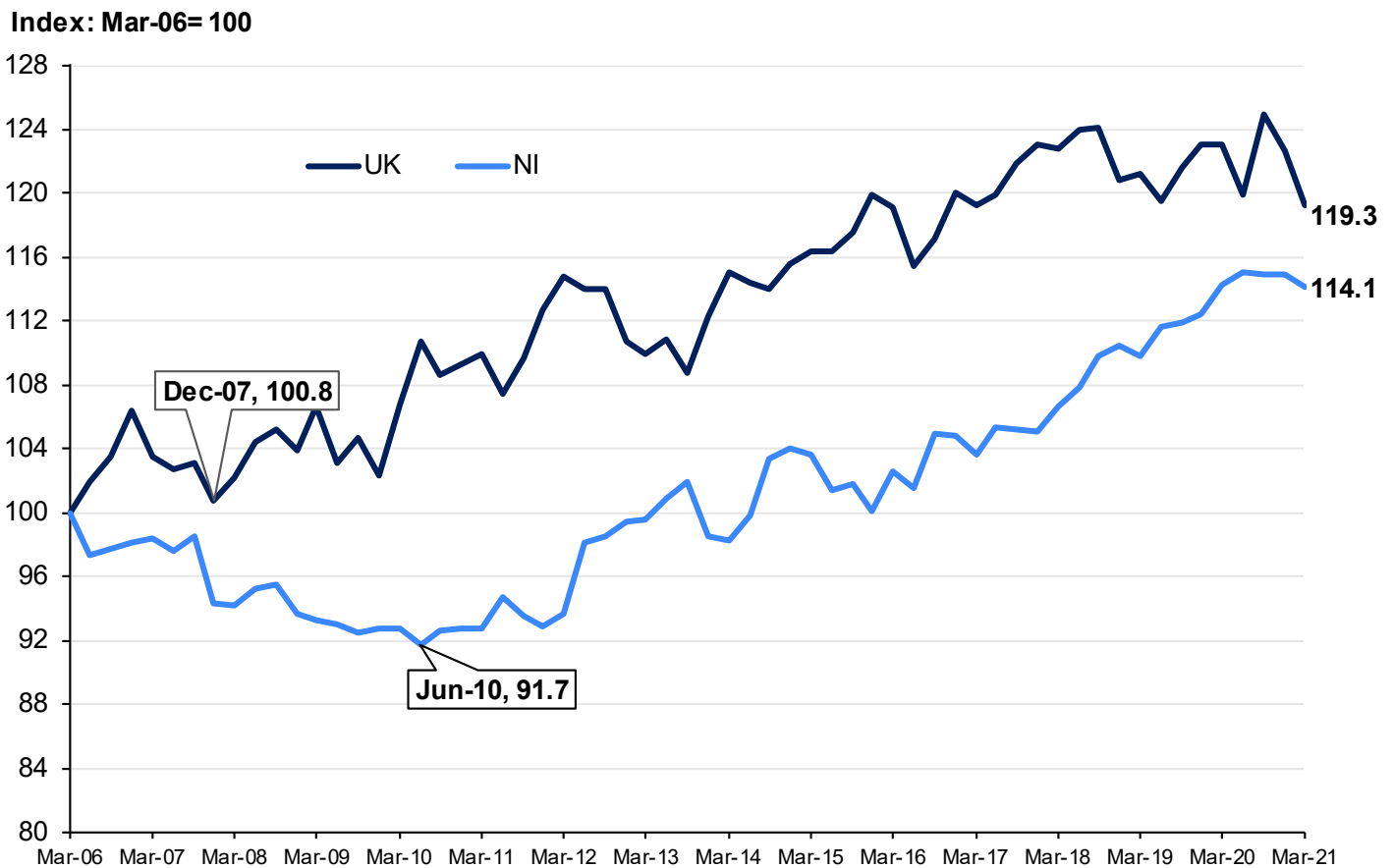
Other industries sector: this sector contains businesses with activity in agriculture, forestry and fishing, mining and quarrying, electricity, gas, steam and air conditioning supply and water supply, sewerage, waste management and remediation activities (industry sections A,B,D and E).

Estimates from the annual Farm Census are included in industry section A (accounting for approximately 90% of the employee jobs in the section). The Farm Census figures are published annually in January and relate to the previous June.

Key Findings:

- Seasonally adjusted figures showed a decrease of 0.7% in the other industries sector over the quarter to March 2021 and a marginal decrease of 0.1% over the year to 24,410 jobs.
- The other industries sector made up 3.2% of all employee jobs in March 2021.

Figure 2.5: Index of other industries sector jobs, March 2006- March 2021



[Download Q1-21 Data](#)

Over the last 10 years the other industries sector in NI and the UK increased overall. The number of employee jobs in the NI other industries sector increased by 4,560 (+23.0%) over the 10 year period to March 2021.

Key Findings

Seasonally adjusted data showed that the other industries sector decreased by 0.7% (-170 jobs) over the quarter and decreased marginally by 0.1% (-20 jobs) over the year to 24,410 jobs.

The following breakdowns are based on 2 digit SIC other industries data that have not been adjusted for seasonality. Please note that estimates at 2 digit SIC can fluctuate due to sampling variability and changes to industrial classification.

Changes over the year

Over the year to March 2021 the unadjusted figures showed a marginal decrease of 0.1% (-20 jobs) in the other industries sector. The biggest changes in this sector over the year were:

- a decrease of 23.8% (-90 jobs) in sewerage.
- a decrease of 2.0% (-40 jobs) in electricity, gas, steam and air conditioning supply.
- an increase of 0.9% (+50 jobs) in waste collection, treatment and disposal activities; materials recovery.
- an increase of 0.6% (+80 jobs) in crop and animal production, hunting and related service activities.

For figures broken down by 2 digit SIC please see table 5.10 on the NISRA - [Economic and Labour Market Statistics website](#).

When using table 5.10 please consider the notes on 'Using 2 Digit SIC Level Data' in section 6 – Further Info.

3 Public/Private Sector Employee Jobs

Public sector: the NI public sector can be broken down into five areas:

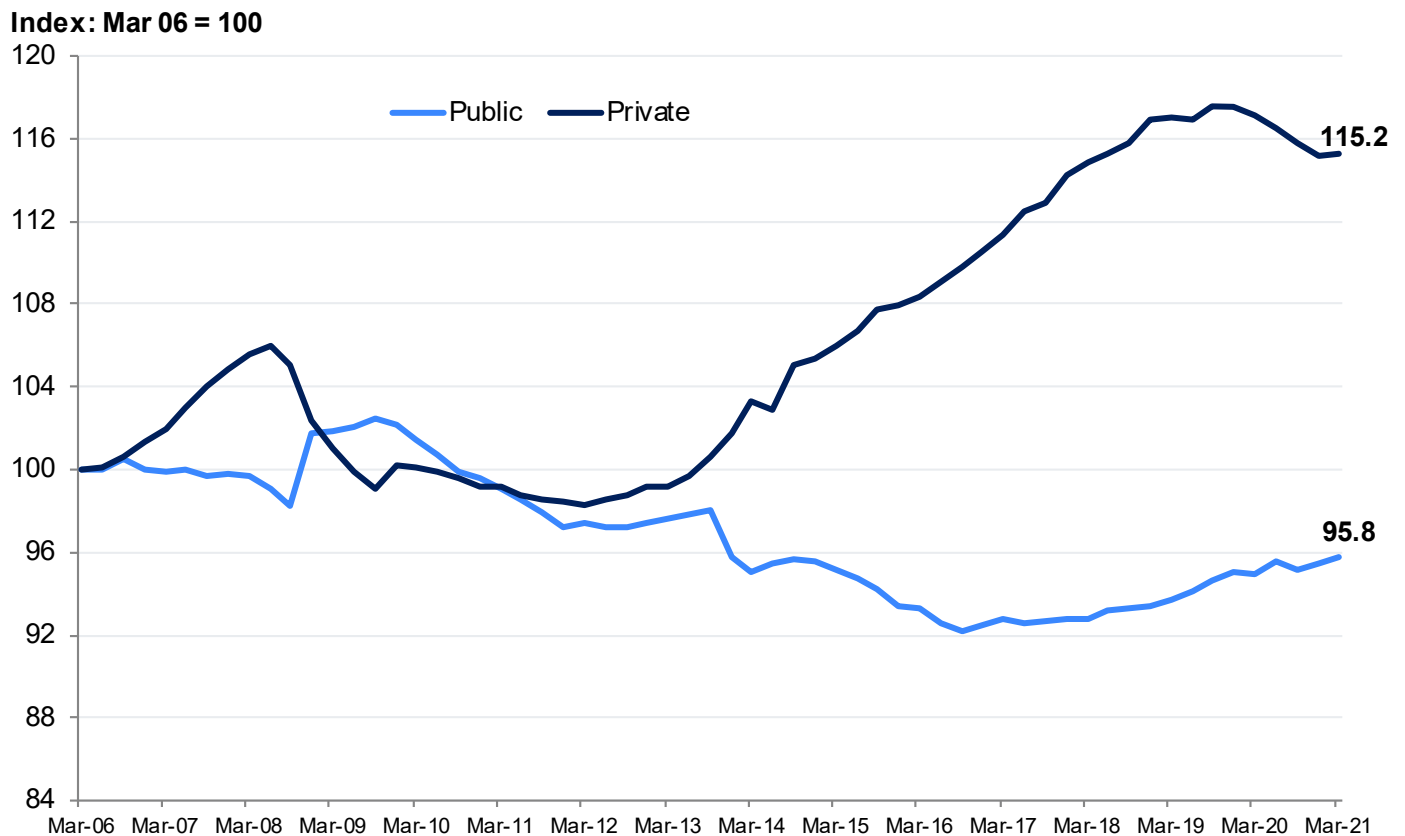
1. NI central government
2. Bodies under aegis of NI central government
3. UK central government employees based in Northern Ireland
4. Local government
5. Public corporations

Private sector: the private sector encompasses all for-profit businesses (that are not owned or operated by the government) and the voluntary sector; which includes charities and other non-profit organisations.

Key Findings:

- **The NI public sector made up 28% and the private sector made up 72% of all employee jobs in March 2021. NI public sector jobs as a proportion of the NI population¹ was 11%. This compares to 8% in the UK.**
- **Seasonally adjusted employee jobs in the private sector increased over the quarter and decreased over the year to 557,390 jobs.**
- **Seasonally adjusted employee jobs in the public sector increased over both the quarter and the year to 213,290 jobs.**

Figure 3.1: Index of NI Private and Public Sector Jobs, March 2006 – March 2021



[Download Q1-21 Data](#)

The latest seasonally adjusted employee jobs figures estimate that there were:

- 557,390 employee jobs in the NI private sector.
- 213,290 employee jobs in the NI public sector.

¹ Latest population estimates available – [June 2019](#).

Changes over the quarter

The latest seasonally adjusted figures represented:

- an increase of 0.1% (+400 jobs) in the private sector.
- an increase of 0.3% (+600 jobs) in the public sector.

Changes over the year

The latest seasonally adjusted figures represented:

- a decrease of 1.6% (-9,260 jobs) in the private sector.
- an increase of 0.9% (+1,890 jobs) in the public sector.

Following five previous consecutive quarters of decline, private sector jobs increased marginally over the quarter (+0.1% or +400 jobs) but decreased over the year (-1.6% or -9,260 jobs) to 557,390 jobs. The annual decrease in private sector jobs was the fourth consecutive quarter of annual decrease.

Following a period of annual decline in public sector employee jobs between June 2015 and June 2017, since September 2017 there have been fifteen consecutive quarters of annual growth in public sector jobs to March 2021. There are 14,900 fewer public sector jobs (-6.5%) than the series peak in September 2009.

4 Composition of Employee Jobs

Please note: data in this section have not been adjusted for seasonality.

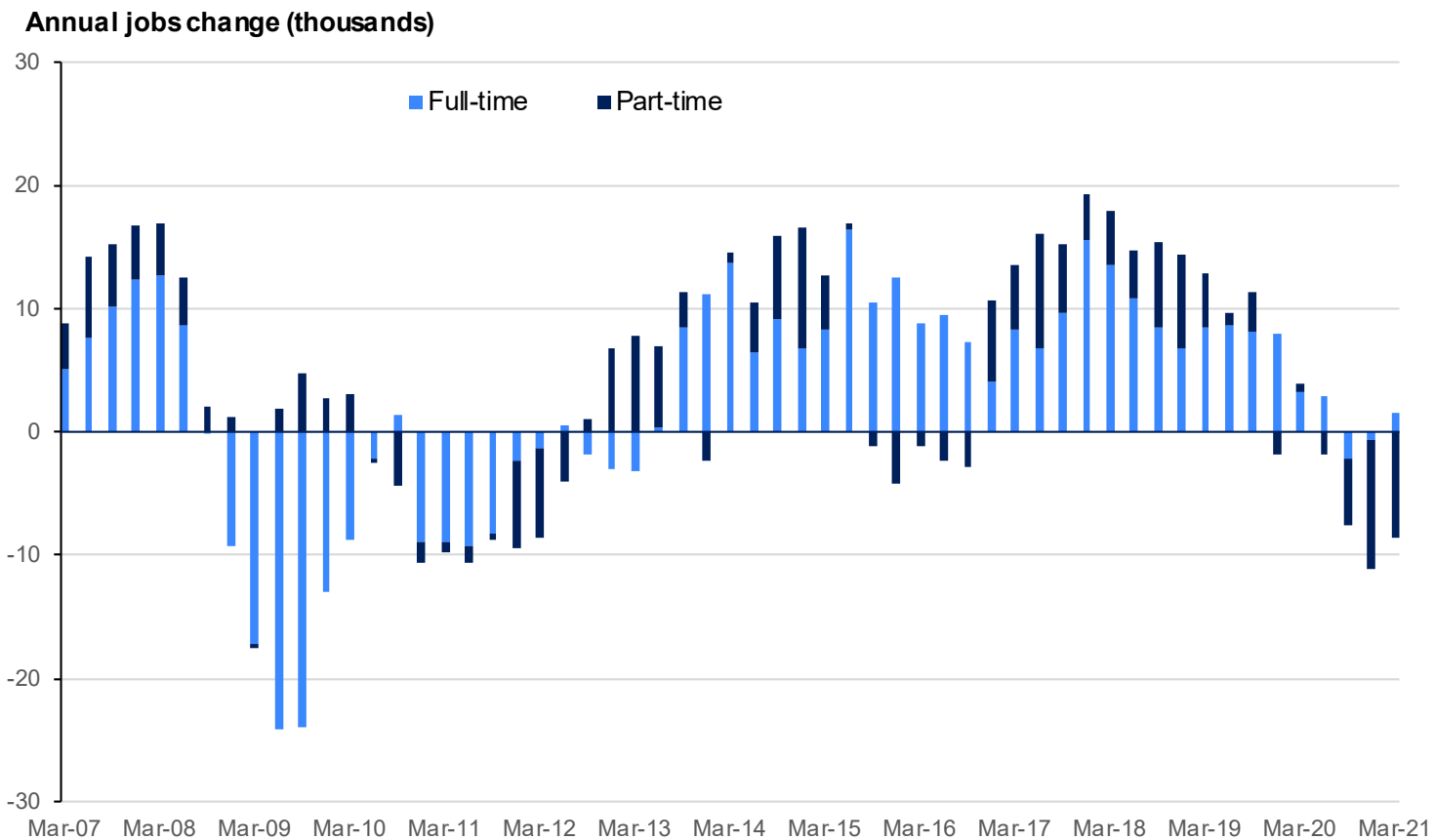
Part-time: part-time means those who normally work 30 hours a week or less.

Full-time: full-time means those who normally work more than 30 hours a week.

Key Findings

- Decreases were seen over the quarter in both full-time (-0.2% or -860 jobs) and part-time jobs (-0.6% or -1,600 jobs) to March 2021.
- An increase was seen in full-time jobs (+0.3% or +1,510 jobs) over the year to March 2021 while part-time jobs decreased (-3.2% or -8,580 jobs).
- Full-time jobs reached a series high in December 2019.
- Part-time jobs accounted for 34% of all employee jobs in March 2021. The proportion of part-time jobs is at its lowest since September 2007.
- The overall annual declines in employee jobs in recent quarters have been driven by part-time job losses.

Figure 4.1: Full-time and part-time jobs annual change, March 2007 – March 2021



[Download Q1-21 Data](#)

The latest estimates showed that:

- Part-time jobs increased by 7.5% (18,130 jobs) since the low point in March 2012.
- The low point for full-time jobs was a year later (March 2013) than for part-time jobs. The number of full-time jobs has increased by 14.8% (65,860 jobs) since this point.

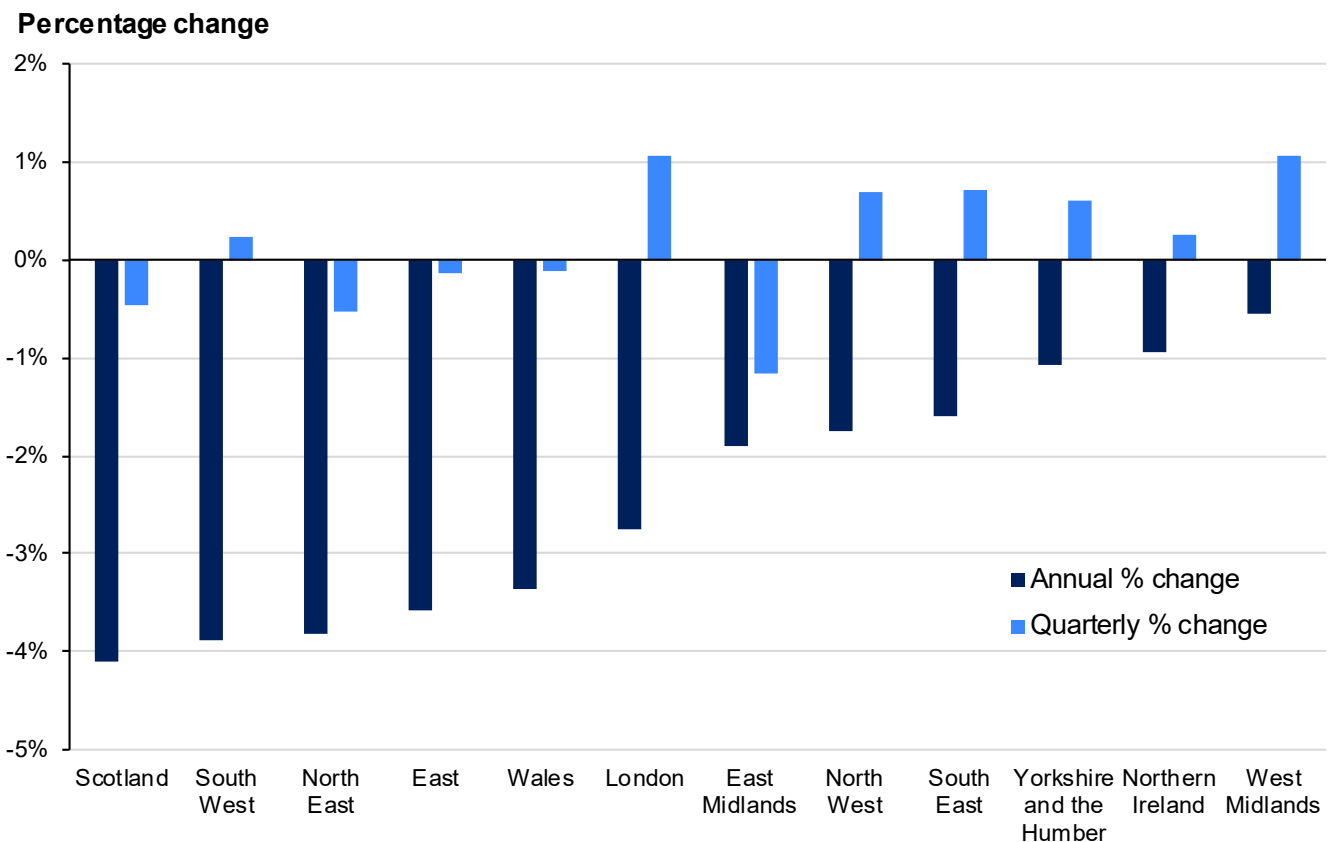
5 UK Comparisons

Employee jobs figures for GB regions are provided by the Office for National Statistics (ONS). ONS produces a publication on [Workforce Jobs by region](#). Unlike QES, Workforce Jobs include employee jobs, self-employed, government supported trainees and Her Majesty's Forces.

Key Findings

- The UK reported an increase in employee jobs over the quarter (+0.4%) and a decrease over the year (-2.4%) to 30.16 million jobs in March 2021.
- Employee jobs increased over the quarter in seven of the twelve regions of the UK.
- Northern Ireland employee jobs increased by 0.3% over the quarter.
- All UK regions showed a decrease in employee jobs over the year. Scotland recorded the largest estimated annual decrease (-4.1%). Northern Ireland employee jobs decreased by 0.9% over the year.

Figure 5.1: Annual and Quarterly Percentage Change in Employee Jobs by UK Region, March 2020 – March 2021 and December 2020 – March 2021



[Download Q1-21 Data](#)

6 Further Information

Background

Estimates of the number of employee jobs are obtained from the Quarterly Business Survey (QBS). The QBS is a statutory survey issued under the Statistics of Trade and Employment (Northern Ireland) Order 1988 and is designed to collect information on employees and turnover. The main outputs are published in four quarterly publications – the [Quarterly Employment Survey](#) (QES), [Index of Services](#) (IOS), [Index of Production](#) (IOP) and [Quarterly Construction Enquiry](#) (QCE).

Impact of COVID-19 on data collection and estimates

Due to restrictions in place for businesses, COVID-19 impacted on the data collection and the validation of employee jobs data, which are collected on the Quarterly Business Survey. The following table provides an overview of median coverage response rates for 2019 and 2020, compared to Quarter 1 2021:

| Response rate type | Quarter 1 2021 | 2020 (median*) | 2019 (median*) |
|--|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| Coverage response rate (<i>returned employees</i>) | 66% | 64% | 77% |

*median value achieved at QES database closure of quarter 1, quarter 2, quarter 3 and quarter 4.

As a result, employee jobs estimates for 2020/2021 may be subject to higher revisions than normal over the coming quarters. These can be tracked through the revisions triangle on the [Quarterly Employment Survey Revisions page](#). Comparisons of provisional employee jobs estimates at lower industry levels in particular (e.g. 2 digit Standard Industrial Classification level), should be treated with caution.

Sample

The QES, IOS, IOP and QCE are sampled independently and there is an overlap between QES and IOS/IOP/QCE of approximately 2,250 businesses. The QES covers all public sector bodies, all private sector firms with 25 or more employees, all businesses with more than one industry activity and a sample of the remainder. QES covers all industrial sections apart from agriculture. Employee estimates for the agricultural sector are provided, on an annual basis (figures for June are provided in the January of the following year), from the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) Farm Census. Agriculture employees include all workers on agricultural businesses other than (a) part-time farmers and partners and (b) farmers' spouses. They include full-time, part-time and casual workers, both paid and unpaid.

The QES sample is drawn from the Inter-Departmental Business Register (IDBR), as follows:

| Employment Size/Sector | Percentage of businesses selected |
|------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 0-9 employees | Sample (4%) |
| 10-24 employees | Sample (9%) |
| Multiple Industry Activities | Full Count (100%) |
| 25+ employees | Full Count (100%) |
| Public Sector | Full Count (100%) |

As the QES is a sample survey, estimates obtained from it are subject to sampling variability i.e. if we drew many similar samples each would give a different result. [Confidence intervals PDF \(665KB\)](#) provide a measure of the size of the sampling variability. The 95% confidence interval for the March 2021 employee jobs estimate is 771,410 +/- 5,460. This means that in 100 similar samples we would expect 95 (95%) of the confidence intervals to contain the true population value of the number of employee jobs.

The survey collects information on numbers of persons in full-time and part-time employment. It should be noted that the survey counts the number of jobs rather than the number of persons with jobs. For example, a person holding both a full-time job and a part-time job, or someone with two part-time jobs, will be counted twice.

Employment results are collated into industry classes using the 2007 Standard Industrial Classification (SIC). As a result, no individual business can be identified.

Updates to the sample frame

The annual Business Register and Employment Survey (BRES) results are used to update employee and SIC code variables on the Inter Departmental Business Register annually in quarter 1. The impact of this update is greatest at 2 digit SIC level. Users should be aware that changes at this level may be due to a reallocation of jobs/businesses to SIC codes following the sample frame update.

Using 2 Digit SIC Level Data

The introduction of sample rotation from March 2014 contributed to the volatility of the series. To counteract these effects from March 2016 the number of businesses selected in SIC and size bands experiencing the greatest impact of rotation increased.

Volatility also arises when businesses inform NISRA of SIC code changes via business surveys, ONS and HM Revenue & Customs (HMRC). This new information helps to improve the industry estimates of employee jobs each quarter but also adds volatility to quarterly and annual changes, particularly at 2 digit SIC level. SICs 74 (Other professional, scientific and technical activities) and 82 (Office administrative, office support and other business support activities) are most affected by updates to industry codes. More information can be found in Section 3 of the [Analysis of the Impact of Quarterly Employment Survey Data Revisions PDF \(555KB\)](#) document. It is therefore recommended that changes in employee jobs estimates at 2 digit SIC level are considered in the context of a longer time series.

Revisions Policy

QES estimates are revised quarterly to reflect the latest information provided by employers. The December 2020 seasonally adjusted estimate published in March 2021 has been revised down (-0.2%). Estimates for the latest quarter as well as the previous four quarters are provisional and subject to revision in light of (a) late responses to surveys and administrative sources and (b) where cross survey congruence checks provide more accurate data. As a result of seasonal adjustment factors which are re-estimated every quarter, there may be amendments to the seasonally adjusted series outside of the revisable period (previous four quarters) and applicable back to March 2005. Only rarely are there avoidable 'errors' such as human or system failures, and such mistakes are made quite clear when they do occur. The revisions triangle can be accessed on the [Quarterly Employment Survey Revisions page](#).

Public Sector Reclassifications

Public sector jobs comprise Central Government (including Bodies under the aegis of Central Government), Local Government and Public Corporations. The following table summarises the changes announced by the Public Sector Classification Committee and the date the changes took place.

| Date of change | Summary | Revision applied from |
|----------------|--|-----------------------|
| Dec 2006 | NI Housing Executive reclassified from SIC 75 to SIC 70 | Mar 2004 |
| Jan 2012 | Water service became a Government owned company, as a result employees transferred from "NI Central Government" to "Bodies under the Aegis of NI Central Government" | Apr 2007 |

| Date of change | Summary | Revision applied from |
|-----------------------|--|------------------------------|
| Dec 2013 | Royal Mail Plc reclassified to private sector | Oct 2013 |
| Mar 2014 | Lloyds Banking Group and its subsidiaries reclassified to private sector | Dec 2013 |
| Sep 2017 | Registered housing associations in NI reclassified to public sector | Sep 1992 |
| Sep 2018 | Registered housing associations in NI moved from section N to L in sections level data | Mar 2005 |
| Aug 2020 | Registered housing associations in NI reclassified to private sector* | Sep 2020 |

*See note on the [Quarterly Employment Survey Revisions](#) page for further information.

Seasonal Adjustment

A seasonally adjusted series provides a better indication of underlying trends in employment. Time series data for seasonally adjusted employee jobs from 2005 to date for industry section (A-S) and main industrial sector are available on the [Quarterly Employment Survey webpage](#).

The following series are seasonally adjusted:

- Male employee jobs in Manufacturing (Section C); Wholesale and Retail Trade, Repair of Motor Vehicles and Motorcycles (Section G); Transportation and Storage (Section H); Accommodation and Food Service Activities (Section I); Administrative and Support Service Activities (Section N); Public Administration and Defence, Compulsory Social Security (Section O); Education (Section P) and Arts, Entertainment and Recreation (Section R).
- Female employee jobs in Mining and Quarrying (Section B); Manufacturing (Section C); Construction (Section F); Wholesale and Retail Trade, Repair of Motor Vehicles and Motorcycles (Section G); Accommodation and Food Service Activities (Section I); Professional, Scientific and Technical Activities (Section M); Public Administration and Defence, Compulsory Social Security (Section O); Education (Section P); Human Health and Social Work Activities (Section Q) and Arts, Entertainment and Recreation (Section R).

Seasonal adjustment models are periodically reviewed as seasonal trends can change over time. The latest review was carried out in November 2018 and more information can be found in Section 3 of the [Analysis of the Impact of Quarterly Employment Survey Data Revisions PDF \(555KB\)](#) document. The next seasonal adjustment review is scheduled to take place in 2021. Following this, larger revisions than usual may be seen in the seasonally adjusted series.

Alternative measures of employment

QES is only one of the measures of employment for Northern Ireland. Other measures are summarised below.

[Business Register and Employment Survey \(BRES\)](#) - a statutory business survey based on a larger sample than QES. Quarter 3 of the QES is taken at the same survey date as BRES. Information on employee jobs at a sub Northern Ireland level (e.g. District Council Area) and at the 5-digit SIC07 level are available from BRES. The QES sample size is designed so that estimates of total employee jobs are within +/- 1% of the BRES total.

[Labour Force Survey \(LFS\)](#) - a household survey carried out by interviewing individuals about their personal circumstances and work. The LFS defines employment as the number of people in work. This differs from the concept of jobs measured by business surveys as a person can have more than one job, and some jobs may be shared by more than one person. LFS employment figures are based on a rolling three month period whereas QES measures the number of jobs on a particular day. LFS employment

figures include those who are employed, self-employed, unpaid family workers and those on government supported training programmes.

[Agricultural Census](#) - the numbers of employees in agriculture are available separately from the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) Agricultural Census. The Census is conducted in June of each year, with the results published in the January of the following year. The QES includes farm census figures in the total number of employee jobs.

[Northern Ireland Civil Service \(NICS\) Employee Bulletin](#) – provides further information on NICS employee jobs. The survey dates for the NICS Employee Bulletin differ from the QES survey dates. As such the figures for the NICS employee jobs may differ. NICS employee jobs figures are included in the QES employee jobs figures and breakdowns can be found in Table 5.12 on the [Economic and Labour Market Statistics website](#) (in the historical data section).

Annualised or Rolling 4 Quarters

Annualised growth or rolling 4 quarters figures are calculated by taking the difference between the average over the most recent 4 quarters and the average over the same 4 quarters of the previous year, as a proportion of the average over the same 4 quarters of the previous year. For example annualised growth of -0.8% in March 2021 reported in this publication is the average number of jobs from Q2 2020 to Q1 2021 minus the average number of jobs from Q2 2019 to Q1 2020, divided by the average number of jobs from Q2 2019 to Q1 2020. This measure allows for comparison in growth to previous years and is useful in determining trends in the data.

Date of next publication

Forthcoming release dates are published in the [Economic & Labour Market Statistics Branch Publication Schedule](#). The next Northern Ireland Quarterly Employment Survey publication is planned for 14th September 2021.

Further information

If you require further information about the figures contained in this publication or the accompanying tables, please contact the Quarterly Employment Survey section using the details below:

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