

Pensions - Further information

Context

The Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings (ASHE) is a UK wide survey that provides a wide range of information on earnings, including workplace pension type by gender, age and sector. The most recent release contains summary statistics from the pension's element of the 2023 Northern Ireland survey. The survey information related to the pay-week (or other pay period if the employee was paid less frequently) which included 19th April 2023, the reference date for the 2023 survey.

ASHE collects information on employee membership of the current employer's pension scheme. This does not include preserved rights in any former employer's pension scheme or pensions paid by a former employer. Employees are defined as making contributions to a workplace pension if they have made a contribution, or had a contribution made on their behalf, in the survey reference period.

Workplace pension reforms

The [Pensions Act 2014](#) was an update of the [Pensions Act 2008](#), which put in place a framework for workplace pension reform designed to increase private pension saving in the UK. One of the main reforms was that, from October 2012, all eligible employees were to be automatically enrolled into a qualifying workplace pension scheme (although workers were able to opt out of their employer's scheme if they wish). These results provide a time series so that comparisons can be made between the most recent year and 2012, the reporting period prior to the initial introduction of automatic enrolment.

[Automatic enrolment](#) applies to eligible employees aged between 22 years and [State Pension age](#) who are not already participating in a

qualifying workplace pension scheme. When automatic enrolment was introduced in October 2012, eligible employees were those earning more than £8,105 per year (threshold increased to £10,000 in April 2016). It was introduced in [stages](#), based on the size of the employer's PAYE scheme on 1 April 2012, beginning with those employers with 250 or more employees and rolling-out to all employers by February 2018. At the time of the ASHE 2018 survey, the roll-out of automatic enrolment was complete.

Further information on automatic enrolment can be found on the NI Direct website at: [Enrolling into a pension at work](#)

Methodology

The Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings (ASHE) is a UK wide survey that provides a wide range of information on earnings and hours worked. The Office for National Statistics (ONS) carries out ASHE in Great Britain and it is carried out by the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA) in NI.

The survey reference date is in April each year, and the results relate to the pay period which included that reference date.

The Pensions Results present the data from 2011 onwards, therefore, it is worth noting a number of methodological changes that have taken place since then.

The impact of the changes increases as the size of the group being considered decreases. For example, conclusions can be drawn when considering broad time trends over the 20-year period, but caution should be taken when comparing across occupations and industries.

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Methodology changes to the Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings

Year	Change	Impact
2022	Change in occupation coding from SOC2010 to SOC 2020	Occupations are used to weight ASHE results. Estimates before 2021 not directly comparable with later estimates.
2013	Change in sample frame from PAYE to RTI PAYE	Small impact on coverage
2012	Change in occupation coding from SOC2000 to SOC 2010	Occupations are used to weight ASHE results. Estimates before 2011 not directly comparable with later estimates.

Coverage and sampling

As in previous years, the sample used for the survey comprised approximately 1% of all employees in NI who were covered by PAYE schemes. Someone who is in more than one PAYE scheme may appear more than once.

Response and weighting

A total of 7,630 ASHE returns were received by NISRA in the most recent year (2023). This equates to 93.4% of employees who were sampled.

ASHE responses are weighted to the number of jobs measured by the Labour Force Survey (LFS) and this weighting is carried out by ONS. The weighting factors include age, sex, occupation and workplace and take account of differing response rates.

Confidentiality

Information on earnings and hours is obtained in confidence from employers under the authority of The Statistics of Trade and Employment (Northern Ireland) Order 1988. Information collected is treated as strictly confidential and is used only for statistical purposes. The resulting analyses do not show information about identifiable people or private businesses.

ACCREDITED OFFICIAL STATISTICS

These official statistics were independently reviewed by the Office for Statistics Regulation in September 2011 following a full [assessment](#) against the [Code of Practice for statistics](#). They comply with the standards of trustworthiness, quality and value in the Code of Practice for Statistics and are therefore labelled as accredited official statistics. Accredited official statistics are called National Statistics in the Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007. For further information, please refer to the Office for Statistics Regulation [accredited official statistics](#) webpage.



As outlined above, our statistical practice is regulated by the Office for Statistics Regulation (OSR).

OSR sets the standards of trustworthiness, quality and value in the Code of Practice for Statistics that all producers of official statistics should adhere to.

You are welcome to contact us directly with any comments about how we meet these standards at ashe-helpline@nisra.gov.uk.

Alternatively, you can contact OSR by emailing regulation@statistics.gov.uk or via the [OSR website](#).