

6 March 2009

Coverage
United Kingdom
Theme
Labour Market



Women in the labour market

To mark International Women's Day on 8 March 2009, the Office for National Statistics (ONS) has used recently published statistics to show women's experiences in the UK labour market.

Figures show how the recent economic downturn is affecting women's employment, redundancies and unemployment in different ways to men's.

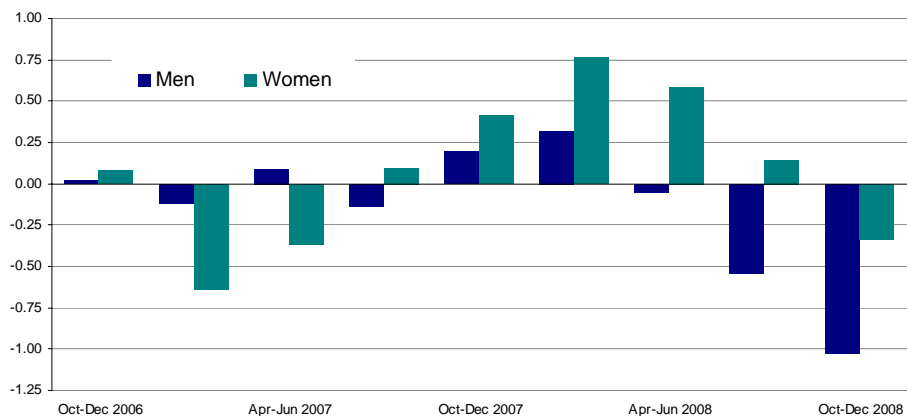
Employment

Over the past four decades, the proportion of women in employment has grown markedly. At the start of 1971, the employment rate for women was 56 per cent compared with 70 per cent in the three months to December 2008. This increase compares with a similar-sized decrease in the employment rate for men over the same period, with the male employment rate falling from 92 per cent to 78 per cent.

The economic downturn in 2008 has impacted less on women in employment than men. The employment rate for women was 0.3 percentage points lower in the three months to December 2008 compared with the same period a year earlier, whilst the male employment rate was 1.0 percentage points lower on the year.

Annual percentage point change in employment rate: by sex¹

United Kingdom,
Percentage points, seasonally adjusted



Note: ¹ Men aged 16 to 64 and Women aged 16 to 59

Source: Labour Force Survey

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The difference may, in part, be explained by the fact that women are more likely to work in the public sector than men. Public sector employment increased by 14,000 (0.2 per cent) between June and September 2008, while the private sector declined by 128,000 (0.5 per cent).

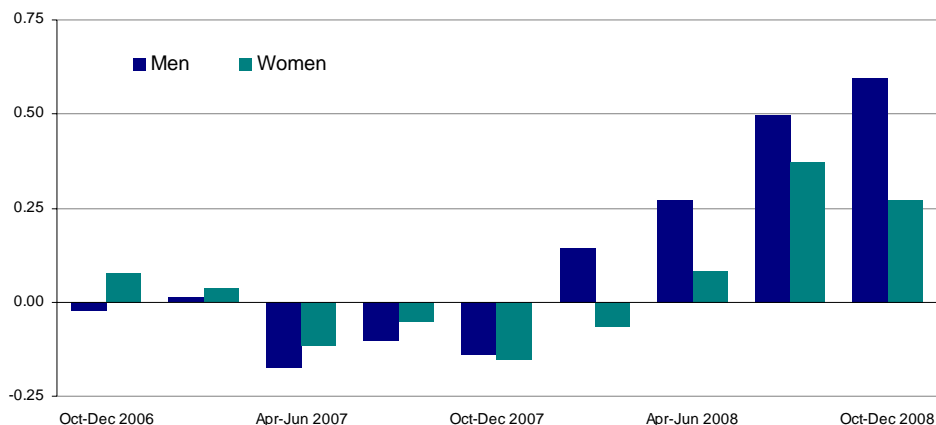
Redundancies

Estimates also suggest that fewer women than men have been made redundant. The redundancy rate for women in the three months to December 2008 was 6.6 per 1,000 employees, less than half that for men which was 13.6 per 1,000 employees.

Unemployment

Unemployment rates for women also grew at a slower pace than for men during 2008. The unemployment rate for women was 5.5 per cent for the three months to December 2008, up 0.3 percentage points on the previous quarter. This contrasts with the unemployment rate for men which stood at 6.9 per cent, up 0.6 percentage points on the previous quarter.

Quarterly percentage point change in unemployment rate: by sex¹
United Kingdom, seasonally adjusted
Percentage points



Note: ¹ Men and women aged 16 and over

Source: Labour Force Survey

BACKGROUND NOTES

1. Estimates in this release are taken from the February 2009 Labour Market Statistics First Release and associated on-line tables. More data are available at <http://www.statistics.gov.uk/StatBase/Product.asp?vlnk=1944>
2. The Labour Force Survey is a survey of the population of private households, student halls of residence and NHS accommodation. As with all sample surveys the LFS is subject to sampling variability and therefore some changes may not be statistically significant.
3. Public Sector Employment estimates are derived from returns from public sector organisations. The private sector estimate is calculated by taking the public sector employment level from the LFS employment level.
4. The employment rate is the proportion of the population of working age (16 to 64 for men, 16 to 59 for women) who are in employment. The unemployment rate is the proportion of the economically active population aged 16 and over who are unemployed. The redundancy rate is based on the ratio of the redundancy level for the given quarter to the number of employees in the previous quarter, aged 16 and over, multiplied by 1,000.
5. **National Statistics** are produced to high professional standards set out in the UK Statistics Authority's Code of Practice. They undergo regular quality assurance reviews to ensure that they meet customer needs. They are produced free from any political interference. © Crown copyright 2009