

Netherleigh House
Massey Avenue
Belfast BT4 2JP
Tel: 028 9052 9421
Textphone: 028 9052 9304
Fax: 028 9052 9658
Email: martin.monaghan@detini.gov.uk

Dear User of NI Labour Market Statistics

IMPLICATIONS OF THE CHANGE IN FEMALE STATE PENSION AGE FOR NORTHERN IRELAND LABOUR MARKET STATISTICS

As you may already be aware, the state pension age for women is set to rise between 2010 and 2020. The current female pension age of 60 will gradually increase, by one month every two months, to 65 by 2020. This change will have implications for the way in which the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment (DETI) presents labour market statistics in relation to the working age population.

At present, the headline employment and economic inactivity rates from the Labour Force Survey (LFS) are presented as a proportion of the working age population. They are therefore based on upper age limits of 59 for women and 64 for men to reflect the current state pension age in the UK. The introduction of a new state pension age for women means that these headline rates will have to change.

The Office for National Statistics (ONS) has carried out a UK wide public consultation¹ in relation to the change to female state pension age and its implications for Labour Market Statistics. ONS plan to accommodate the change as follows:

- From August 2010, the current working age employment and inactivity rates in the UK and Regional labour market statistical bulletins will be replaced with headline rates based on those aged from 16 to 64 for both men and women. These will include consistent employment and economic inactivity rates back to and including 1992.

- The existing rates, based on women aged from 16 to 59 and men aged from 16 to 64, will continue to be published for a limited period.
- Each quarter, a rate that follows the incremental increases in the female state pension age will be available from the LFS.
- The rates for the existing working-age (16-59/64) and for those that follow the incremental increases in female state pension age will be published on the ONS website but not in the labour market statistical bulletins.

Further details of ONS's plans, together with an analysis of the effect of the new state pension age, were published in an article in the January 2010 Economic and Labour Market Review².

In order to maintain a level of consistency with the ONS plan, DETI proposes to adopt a similar approach for the publication of Northern Ireland labour market statistics. That is from August 2010, the headline 'working age' rates will be based on those aged 16 to 64 for both men and women in all regular statistical publications. However, rates based on the 'old' working age definition (16-59/64) and rates based on the incremental increase in the female state pension age will also be available via the Department's website³.

We hope that these new procedures will be sufficient to meet your data needs. However, if you have any queries on the above or have any specific information needs in relation to 'working-age' statistics, please feel free to contact me using the details above.

Yours sincerely,

Martin Monaghan

¹ Details of the ONS public consultation in relation to the change to female state pension age and the implications for Labour Market Statistics
<http://www.ons.gov.uk/about/consultations/consultation-on-labour-market-statistics/index.html>

² http://www.statistics.gov.uk/elmr/01_10/downloads/ELMR_Jan10_Kent.pdf

³ <http://www.detini.gov.uk/deti-stats-index/stats-surveys.htm>