

JOBS AUDIT

Employment by gender since the
recession of 2008-9

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Introduction

When the global financial crisis first hit the UK labour market in 2008 it was widely expected that in our increasingly service based economy women were likely to suffer more than in previous recessions. Moreover, when the coalition government began to cut public spending in 2010 women were again expected to bear the brunt of the impact of job cuts given the relatively high proportion of women working in the public sector.

The plight of women in the UK labour market has also been stressed in a recent report from the government sponsored Women's Business Council "Maximizing Women's Contribution to Economic Growth." The report notes that over 2.4 million UK women are not in work but want to work, and also suggests that women are currently setting up new businesses at half the rate of men. In the light of all this attention, this *Jobs Audit* therefore looks at official data from the Office for National Statistics in order to assess the extent to which these expectations have been fulfilled and how well women have been doing in the labour market in recent years.

Employment by gender

Table 1 shows UK employment by gender for q1 (January – March) in each year since 2008. Q1 2008 is the last quarter before the onset of recession, q1 2013 is the most recent quarter for which data are available. Table 2 shows the corresponding annual change in employment by gender to q1 in each year and the overall net change between q1 2008 and q1 2013.

Although the proportion of women aged 16 and over in work (the employment rate) is lower than that of men, women have generally fared better than men in the five years since the start of the recession. The number of women in work has increased by more than a quarter of a million (a net rise of 267,000, or +1.2%) while the number of men in work has fallen slightly (a net fall of 70,000, -0.4%). The male employment rate has fallen by 3 percentage points to 64.3%, the female employment rate by only 0.6 percentage points to 53.3%.

Table 1: Employment by gender q12008-q12013 (people aged 16 and over), UK seasonally adjusted)

Q1 Year	Men		Women		All	
	000s	Emp rate %	000s	Emp rate %	000s	Emp rate %
2008	15959	67.0	13552	53.9	29510	60.3
2009	15694	65.5	13478	55.3	29172	59.2
2010	15354	63.3	13453	59.2	28807	58.0
2011	15643	64.0	13586	53.1	29229	58.4
2012	15695	63.7	13579	52.7	29274	58.1
2013	15889	64.0	13819	53.3	29708	58.5

Source: ONS, Labour Force Survey

Table 2: Net change in employment by gender q12008-q12013 (people aged 16 and over), UK seasonally adjusted)

Q1 Year	Men		Women		All	
	000s	% change in year to q1	000s	% change in year to q1	000s	% change in year to q1
2008-2009	-265	-1.7	-74	-0.5	-338	-1.1
2009-2010	-340	-2.2	-25	-0.2	-365	-1.3
2010-2011	+289	1.9	+133	+0.1	+422	+1.5
2011-2012	+52	+0.3	-7	-0.05	+45	+0.2
2012-13	+194	+1.3	+240	+1.8	+434	+1.5
Net change q12008 to q12013	-70	-0.4	+267	+1.2	+198	+0.7

Source: ONS, Labour Force Survey

However, the experience of men and women has differed over the course of the past five years. The number of men in employment fell much more sharply than the number of women in employment in the two years to q1 2010 (-600,000 for men, -100,000 for women), increased more than the number of women in employment in the subsequent two years to q1 2012 (+340,000 for men, +140,000 for women) but slightly less in the year to q12013 (+194 for men, +240,000 for women).

Employment by gender and age

The overall net change in employment by gender also masks significance differences between different age groups (table 3). Older people have by far registered the biggest gains in employment. The number of women aged 50 and over in employment is almost half a million (457,000) higher than at the start of the recession in 2008, the number of men in this age category in employment having increased by a quarter of a million (258,000). The relatively large increase in the number of older women at work is likely to in part reflect the shift toward equalizing the state pension for age for women and men, which began in April 2010 and is due to be completed by 2020.

Relative change in the number of people in employment in each age category is affected by demographic change which alters the age balance of the workforce. The underlying change in employment is thus better identified by the employment rate (i.e. the proportion of people in each age category in employment, table 4). The employment rate of women aged 50-64 has increased by 3.3 percentage points since 2008 (to 61.6%). Employment rates have fallen for all other working age categories. The only other age category to register an employment rate rise since 2008 are men aged 65 and over (the employment rate for this cohort having increased by 2.1 percentage points to 12.6%, slightly higher than the corresponding rise of 1.8 percentage points to 6.5% for women aged 60 and over).

Table 3: Net change in employment by age and gender q12008-q12013 (people aged 16 and over), UK seasonally adjusted)

Age range	Men				Women			
	Net change q12008 to q1 2013 000s	Net change q12008 to q1 2013 %	Net change q12008 to q1 2013 000s	Net change q12008 to q1 2013 %	Net change q12008 to q1 2013 000s	Net change q12008 to q1 2013 %	Net change q12008 to q1 2013 000s	Net change q12008 to q1 2013 %
16-17	-130	-48.0	-98	-35.8				
18-24	-208	-10.7	-121	-6.9				
25-34	+296	+8.5	+228	+8.0				
35-39	-288	-5.0	-199	-3.8				
50-64	+92	+2.3	+327	+10.0				
65+	+166	+37.8	+130	+53.0				

Source: ONS, Labour Force Survey

Table 4: Net change in employment rates by age and gender q12008-q12013 (people aged 16 and over), UK seasonally adjusted)

Age range	Men				Women			
	Employment rate q1 2013	Net percentage point change q12008 to q1 2013	Employment rate q1 2013	Net percentage point change q12008 to q1 2013	Employment rate q1 2013	Net percentage point change q12008 to q1 2013	Employment rate q1 2013	Net percentage point change q12008 to q1 2013
16-17	18.9	-14.3	24.6	-10.8				
18-24	59.2	-7.7	57.1	-5.2				
25-34	85.9	-2.9	71.7	-0.9				
35-39	87.3	-1.4	76.5	-0.1				
50-64	72.6	-0.7	61.6	+3.3				
65+	12.6	+2.1	6.5	+1.8				

Source: ONS, Labour Force Survey

Employment by gender and employment status

Table 5 breaks down the change in employment by gender according to whether people are employees, self-employed, unpaid family workers, or directly employed on a government work or training scheme. The most noticeable change since 2008 is a net rise of 320,000 to 4.17 million in the number of self-employed people (the number of people working as employees having fallen by a net 150,000). Women account for approaching two-thirds (203,000, or 63%) of this net increase in self-employment, the number of women self-employed having increased by almost a fifth (19.3%) since the start of the recession.

For both men and women the rise in self-employment is mainly due to part-time self-employment (up 106,000 or 27% for men and up 120,000 or 22.4% for women, table 6). The number of men working full-time as employees has fallen by 370,000 (-3.2%) while the number of women working full-time as employees has fallen by 55,000 (-0.8%). The number of both men and women working part-time as employees has increased (by 154,000 and 125,000 respectively), though in percentage terms the increase is much larger for men (11.4%) than for women (2.5%). There has also been a relatively large increase in the number of men working as temporary employees (up 15% to 760,000) compared to women (up 11.3% to 855,000).

Table 5: Net change in employment by gender and employment status q12008-q12013 (people aged 16 and over), UK seasonally adjusted)

Employment status	Men			Women		
	Total men in category at q1 2013 000s	Net change in q12008 to q1 2013 000s	Net change to q12008 to q1 2013 %	Total women in category at q1 2013 000s	Net change in q12008 to q1 2013 000s	Net change to q12008 to q1 2013 %
Employee	12820	-217	-1.6	12460	+69	+0.5
Self employed	2924	+116	+4.1	1252	+203	+19.3
Unpaid family workers	39	+1	+2.6	66	-3	-4.3
Government scheme	106	+31	+41.3	41	-1	-2.3

Source: ONS, Labour Force Survey

Table 6: Net change in employment by gender and full-time and part-time status q12008-q12013 (people aged 16 and over), UK seasonally adjusted)

Employment status	Men			Women		
	Total men in category at q1 2013 000s	Net change in q12008 to q1 2013 000s	Net change to q1 2013 %	Total women in category at q1 2013 000s	Net change in q12008 to q1 2013 000s	Net change to q1 2013 %
Employee Full-time	11325	-371	-3.2	7240	-55	-0.8
Employee Part-time	1495	+154	+11.4	5220	+125	+2.5
Self-employed Full-time	2425	+9	+0.4	597	+82	+16.9
Self-employed part-time	499	+106	+27.0	655	+120	+22.4
Has second job	432	-18	-4.0	666	+14	+2.1
Temporary employee	761	+101	+15.0	855	+87	+11.3

Source: ONS, Labour Force Survey

Unemployment by gender

Particular concern about women in the labour market was triggered in 2010 when the number of women unemployed and actively seeking work rose above 1 million for the first time since 1993. And although the net increase in unemployment has been smaller for women than men since the start of the recession (408,000 compared with 492,000), in percentage terms unemployment has increased by more for women (+4.7%) than men (+2.5%, table 7).

Table 7: Unemployment by gender q12008-q12013 (people aged 16 and over), UK seasonally adjusted)

Q1 Year	Men		Women		All	
	000s	Un rate %	000s	Un rate %	000s	Un rate %
2008	939	5.6	680	4.8	1618	5.2
2009	1342	7.9	884	6.2	2225	7.1
2010	1544	9.1	969	6.7	2512	8.0
2011	1433	8.4	1027	7.0	2460	7.8
2012	1494	8.7	1116	7.6	2610	8.2
2013	1430	8.3	1088	7.3	2518	7.8
Net change	+492	+2.7	+408	2.5	+900	+2.5
q1 2008 to q1 2013	(+53%)	percentage points	(+60%)		(+56%)	Percentage points

Source: ONS, Labour Force Survey

However, as table 8 shows, there has been a correspondingly large net rise in the number of women who are economically active (up 676,000, or +4.6%), which has greatly exceeded the net increase in the number of women in work as discussed earlier.

Table 8: Number of people economically active by gender q12008-q12013 (people aged 16 and over), UK seasonally adjusted)

Q1 Year	Men		Women		All	
	000s	Activity rate %	000s	Activity rate %	000s	Activity rate %
2008	16897	70.9	14231	56.6	31128	63.6
2009	17063	70.9	14362	56.8	31398	63.7
2010	16898	69.7	14422	56.7	31320	63.1
2011	17076	69.9	14613	57.1	31689	63.3
2012	17189	69.8	14695	57.0	31884	63.2
2013	17319	69.7	14907	57.5	32226	63.5
Net change	+422	+1.2	+676	+0.9	1098	-0.1
q1 2008 to	(+2.5%)	percentage	(+4.6%)	percentage	(+3.5)	percentage
q1 2013		points		points		points

Source: ONS, Labour Force Survey

Consequently, the net rise in female unemployment since the start of the recession is due to a net increase in the number of women participating in the labour market rather than a net fall in the number of women in employment. In other words the deterioration in female unemployment is symptomatic of mounting job shortage rather than net job loss. By contrast, the net rise in male unemployment is due to a combination of net job loss and job shortage.

'Want work' joblessness by gender

The relative position of men and women looks somewhat different if instead of focusing purely on whether people are without work and economically inactive one also takes into account people who want work but are not actively seeking work. Adding inactive people to unemployed job seekers gives a figure for the number of jobless people who want a job (see table 9). It is from this calculation that the Women's Business Council observes that 2.4 women in the UK are currently without work but want to work.

As table 9 shows, the want work measure of joblessness is normally somewhat higher for women than men, in part because women's desire to work may be limited by childcare or elder care responsibilities which makes moving into work relatively difficult or expensive and/or restricts active job search. However, there is relatively little difference in the total level of want work joblessness between women (2.45million) and men (2.36 million), while the net increase in this total since the start of the recession is larger for men (513,000, +27.2%) than women (470,000, 23.7). It is therefore far from obvious why the problem of workless women, measured in this way, deserves any more particular attention than that of workless men.

Table 9: Number of people who want work by gender q12008-q12013 (people aged 16 and over), UK seasonally adjusted)

Q1 Year	Men			Women		
	Unemployed 000s	Inactive but want work 000s	Total want work 000s	Unemployed 000s	Inactive but want work 000s	Total want work 000s
2008	939	913	1852	680	1302	1982
2013	1430	935	2365	1088	1364	2452
Net change q1 2008 to q1 2013	+492 (+53%)	+22 (2.4%)	+514 (+27.7%)	+408 (+60%)	+62 (+4.7%)	+470 (+23.7)

Source: ONS, Labour Force Survey