

Embargoed until 00.01 Monday 10 June 2013

UK jobs five years after start of recession – women do better than men, older women do best of all

A report published today by The Jobs Economist consultancy looks at what's happened to employment and unemployment for men and women since the start of the recession in 2008 and questions the widespread assertion that women have been relatively adversely affected.

- 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 (a net fall of 70,000, -0.4%).
- 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 by 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 increased by less in the year to q1 2013 (+194 for men, +240,000 for women).
- 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 employment

rate of women aged 50-64 has increased by 3.3 percentage points since 2008. Employment rates have fallen for all other working age categories.

- Women account for approaching two-thirds (203,000, or 63%) of the net increase in self-employment since 2008, the number of women self-employed having increased by almost a fifth (19.3%).
- 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 (+60%) than men (+53%). However, the net rise in female unemployment since the start of the recession is due to job shortage rather than job loss, with a substantial net increase of 676,000 in the number of women participating in the labour market exceeding the net increase in the number of women in employment.
- There is relatively little difference between the number of economically active and inactive jobless women who want to work (2.45million) and the corresponding number of jobless men (2.36 million). Moreover, the net increase in this so-called 'want work' joblessness since the start of the recession is larger for men (513,000, +27.2%) than women (470,000, 23.7%).

Dr John Philpott, Director of The Jobs Economist, comments:

“It’s widely asserted that the combination of prolonged economic stagnation and fiscal austerity is hitting women especially hard, with the recent report from the government sponsored Women’s Business Council highlighting the large number of UK women currently without jobs. Yet while we need to get more women into jobs and close the gender pay gap, the reality is that women have generally fared better than men in the labour market since the start of the recession and it’s therefore far from obvious that the problem of workless women deserves greater attention than that of workless men.”

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Notes to Editors:

John Philpott is available for interview

A copy of ***Employment by gender since the recession of 2008-9*** is available on request

The Jobs Economist is an independent consultancy specializing in analysis of employment and pay trends and related public policy issues

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