

Article

# Reconciliation of estimates of jobs: March 2018

Compares the latest workforce jobs (WFJ) estimates with the equivalent estimates of jobs from the Labour Force Survey (LFS).



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# 1 . Background

This report compares the latest workforce jobs (WFJ) estimates with the equivalent estimates of jobs from the Labour Force Survey (LFS). This is produced four times a year (March, June, September and December), when the latest WFJ estimates are released.

The concept of employment (measured by the LFS as the number of people in work) differs from the concept of jobs, since a person can have more than one job and some jobs may be shared by more than one person. The LFS, which collects information mainly from residents of private households, is the preferred source of statistics on employment.

The LFS can also be used to produce estimates of the total number of jobs in the UK, by adding together the headline employment figures (which are equivalent to main jobs) and those for workers with a second job. The WFJ series, which is compiled mainly from surveys of businesses, is the preferred source of statistics on jobs by industry, since it provides a more reliable industry breakdown than the LFS.

## 2 . Comparison: December 2017

The Labour Force Survey (LFS) estimate of total UK jobs for the three-month period from November to January 2018 is calculated by adding together the LFS figures for total employment (32.248 million) and workers with second jobs (1.139 million). On comparing this LFS UK jobs estimate (33.387 million) with the corresponding workforce jobs (WFJ) figure for December 2017, (35.110 million) the LFS total jobs estimate is lower than the WFJ figure by 1.723 million (5.2% of the LFS total).

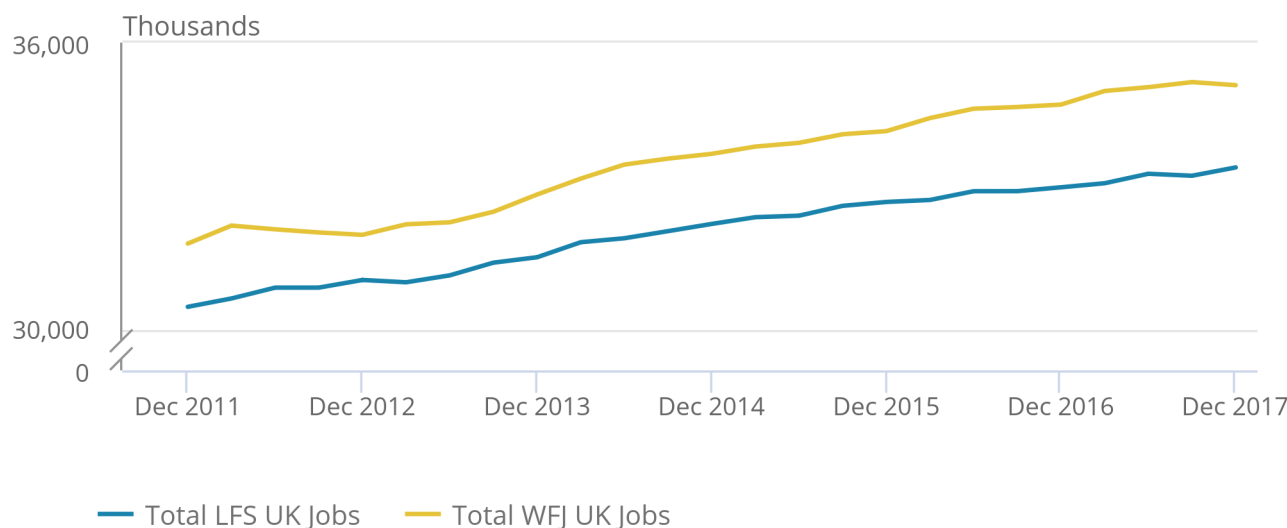
Figure 1 illustrates this comparison over time. These estimates have not been adjusted for factors causing differences between the two sources because many of these factors cannot be measured on a quarterly basis. Over the latest comparable quarterly periods, the LFS series shows a quarterly increase of 174,000 jobs (0.5%) and the WFJ series shows a decrease of 64,000 (0.2%). On an annual basis, the LFS series shows an increase of 416,000 (1.3%) and the WFJ series shows an increase of 407,000 (1.2%).

**Figure 1: Labour Force Survey and workforce jobs estimates of jobs as published, thousands (seasonally adjusted)**

UK, December 2011 to December 2017

**Figure 1: Labour Force Survey and workforce jobs estimates of jobs as published, thousands (seasonally adjusted)**

UK, December 2011 to December 2017



Source: Labour Force Survey - Office for National Statistics

[The 2006 National Statistics Quality Review of Employment and Jobs Statistics \(PDF, 4.35MB\)](#) identified about 30 reasons why the LFS and WFJ estimates of jobs can differ from each other. Some of these factors can be quantified approximately using information from the LFS and other sources, while others are much more difficult to measure. The measurable factors causing differences between the LFS and WFJ figures are included in a downloadable spreadsheet within the “download chart” option of this report.

### 3 . Reconciliation

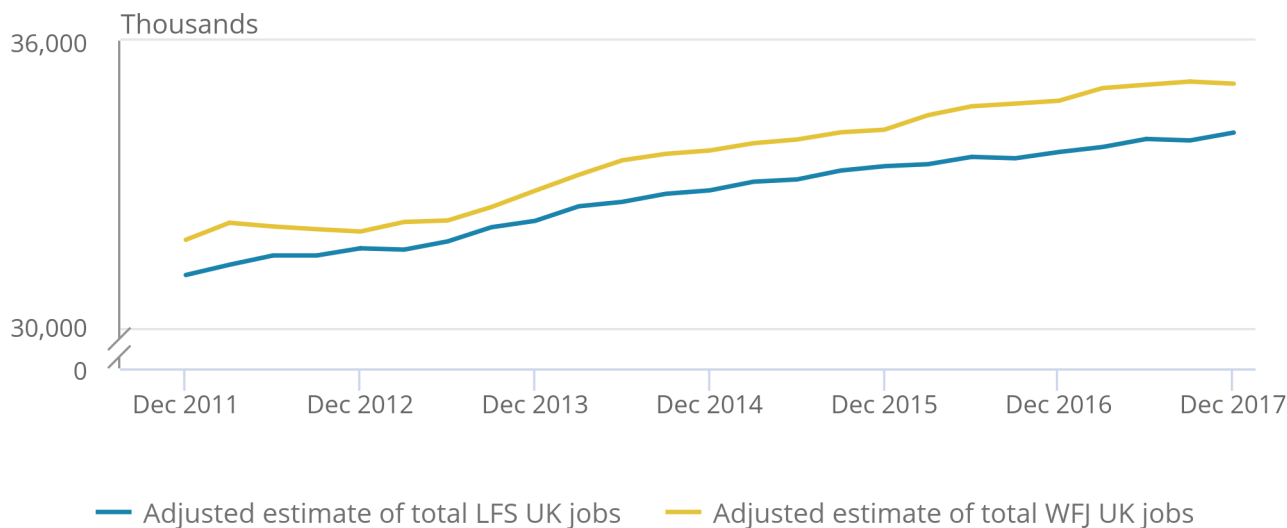
Figure 2 shows the two jobs series adjusted to take into account the measurable factors causing differences between the Labour Force Survey (LFS) and workforce jobs (WFJ) statistics. Once these factors have been taken into consideration, the adjusted LFS estimate of total UK jobs is lower than the adjusted WFJ estimate, by 1.024 million (3.0% of the LFS total).

**Figure 2: Labour Force Survey and workforce jobs estimates of jobs adjusted for measurable differences, thousands (seasonally adjusted)**

UK, December 2011 to December 2017

Figure 2: Labour Force Survey and workforce jobs estimates of jobs adjusted for measurable differences, thousands (seasonally adjusted)

UK, December 2011 to December 2017



Source: Labour Force Survey - Office for National Statistics

The difference between the adjusted LFS and WFJ estimates (1.024 million) is beyond the likely bounds of the sampling variability of the difference. The approximate sampling variability (95% confidence interval) is roughly plus or minus 300,000 to plus or minus 400,000. However, it should be noted that the adjustments are themselves subject to a margin of uncertainty and there are other factors causing differences between the two sources, which have not been adjusted for.

There are about 20 additional factors that could explain the remaining difference between the LFS and WFJ estimates. As well as sampling variability, they include, for example, timing effects. The LFS estimates are averages for three-month periods, whereas business surveys measure the number of jobs on a particular day.

## 4 . Additional notes

There have been some historical revisions to the adjustments for measurable differences used for the reconciliation between workforce jobs and Labour Force Survey statistics.

We have launched a [consultation](#), which may result in changes to the frequency of publication of this article. Please take a look at what we're proposing to do and comment on our proposal.