# Labour Force Survey 2019: RNIB research brief

Version 0.1

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## Background

### Labour Force Survey

The Labour Force Survey (LFS) is a study of the employment circumstances of the UK population. It is one of the largest household studies in the UK, with 40,000 households (roughly 100,000 individuals) taking part each quarter. It provides the official measures of employment and unemployment.

LFS survey data is available via the UK Data Service. Currently. the most recent data available covers the period July to September 2018.

### RNIB research projects

RNIB has conducted several projects using data from LFS over the last decade. These research reports have compared the employment circumstances of blind and partially sighted people to other disabled people and non-disabled people.

In LFS, the criteria for defining someone as having sight loss is broader than that used in research like My Voice, which focused on people who were registered blind or partially sighted. LFS highlights the experiences of long-term disabled people whose main health problem is sight loss. As the definition is broader LFS includes people who have less severe sight loss. This means that the overall employment rate for people with sight loss is higher when compared to My Voice.

RNIB’s LFS analysis has been based on an aggregate of 12 quarters worth of data. As sight loss amongst working age people is uncommon, leading to small sample sizes, aggregating the data helps makes the analysis more reliable. This is in line with Office for National Statistics guidelines for analysing LFS data for small population groups.

We have conducted work covering the following periods:

* July 2004 to June 2007, published in 2008.
* October 2007 to September 2010, published in 2011.
* October 2009 to September 2012, published 2013.
* October 2010 to September 2013, published 2014.
* October 2012 to September 2015, published 2016.

There was also an additional report published in 2015 covering data from the LFS EU disability module, which was a one-off module of standardised disability questions used in employment surveys across Europe.

The first LFS report was commissioned and carried out by the Institute for Employment Studies. All subsequent reports were commissioned and carried out by the University of Birmingham.

## LFS 2016 report

In 2016, RNIB commissioned the University of Birmingham to update their previous analysis for the Labour Force Survey. The key findings were as follows

#### Proportion of people in employment (including self employed)

* 45% - Long term disabled with a seeing difficulty
* 48% - Other long term disabled
* 79% - Not disabled
* 74% - All people of working age

**Employment rates for people with sight loss had reduced**

There had been a 4% reduction in the employment rate for people with sight loss since 2010. This backed up findings from My Voice that also highlighted this decrease.

#### Qualification status was an important indicator

* Only 13 per cent of people with sight loss who had no qualifications were in employment, compared to 58% of people with a disability.
* People with sight loss who had a degree had about the same chance of being in employment than someone without a disability who had no qualifications.

#### The 2016 report contains the following analysis:

* Employment, unemployment and inactive status (by all working age people and by age group)
* Duration of unemployment
* Employment status by education
* Full or part time employment
* Permanent or temporary employment
* Public or private sector
* Occupation (by broad category)
* Reasons for leaving last job
* Gross monthly pay
* Disability benefits claimed
* Other benefits or tax credits claimed

## Factors to consider for future work

### People not of working age

Previously analysis of LFS has only included data for people of working age. For example, the 2016 report selected men up to the age of 64 years and women up to the age of 59 years. There is a growing trend for people working beyond State Pension Age. This is potentially significant for RNIB because incidence of sight loss increases significantly between the ages of 60-64 and 65-69 years.

### Changing definition of sight loss

LFS has changed the way disabled people are segmented from the old Disability Discrimination Act model to the Equality Act. As a result, there will be some changes to account for in any new analysis that is done.

Perhaps more significantly, previous analysis has only included people who identified sight loss as their main health problem. Many more respondents list sight loss as the second or third most important health problem. Given the significant amount of co-morbidity (roughly half of all visually impaired children also have an additional disability), it may be worth at least looking at what evidence is available on these groups.

### Quicker updates based on data from four quarters

Previous analysis has aggregated survey data over 12 quarters. This is important when looking at data for small samples of respondents. But for the LFS analysis this is only essential when looking at sub-sections within the population. For example, when looking at employment status by age group or length of time out of work for those who are unemployed. If the focus is headline information on the number of people sight loss in work, unemployed and economically inactive then aggregating data over four quarters is perfectly adequate. This approach would make annual updates of this evidence feasible.

### Additional topic areas

The following areas might also provide good data it was include them in the analysis:

* Internet usage (at home)
* Travel to and from work
* Hours worked
* Length of time in current job
* Sickness and absence
* Subjective wellbeing
* Employment sector

## Timescales and outputs

We have familiarised ourselves with the LFS data, and we are able to replicate the approach the used by the University of Birmingham in the previous reports.

Reproducing something like the previous reports will take us around 10 to 12 days to complete. If we add in some additional analysis, for example for people over State Pension Age and/or additional topics, that will add another few days.

We would plan to produce:

* Research report (around 30 pages, including data tables and charts)
* Short research summary (two pages)
* PowerPoint presentation (20 minutes)

## Next steps

To agree scope of new analysis and deadlines with Social Change team.

John Slade

Strategy and Performance

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