

NEWS RELEASE

Wednesday 22nd January 2020



Number of older workers on zero-hour contracts nearly doubles in past six years, ONS statistics show

- Number of workers aged 50-64 on zero-hours contracts grows 93% to 207,000 from October-December 2013 to April-June 2019
- 40% of 55 to 74-year-olds retiring early did so due to health or physical problems with a further 18% made redundant and unable to find new employment

The number of workers aged 50-64 on zero-hours contracts has nearly doubled in the last six years¹, rising at a faster rate than any other age group and raising concerns that older workers may be finding it difficult to find jobs with standard conditions, latest official figures reveal.

<i>Number of workers on zero-hour contracts</i>	Oct-Dec 2013	Apr-June 2019	Rise	Growth
Age 16-24	214,000	330,000	116,000	54%
25-34	119,000	137,000	18,000	15%
35-49	103,000	168,000	65,000	63%
50-64	107,000	207,000	100,000	93%
65+	42,000	54,000	12,000	29%

Commenting on the latest ONS Labour market figures, **Stephen Lowe, group communications director at Just Group**, said:

“The number of workers aged 50-64 reached a record high of 9.284 million with a rise of 17% in the number of female workers compared to a 11% rise for males in the last five years.

“It is interesting to note that the number in this age group on zero-hours contracts was up 93% since the end of 2013. This growth is far higher than for any other age group, and is during a period the ONS highlights as seeing a substantial increase in these kind of employment contracts.

“A benign explanation might be that this reflects older workers easing themselves into retirement. A more worrying explanation is that people in this age group are finding it difficult to find jobs with standard employment conditions.

“More women than men are employed on zero hours contracts and more lower-skilled than higher-skilled workers too. These are both groups identified as having lower than average private pension provision so perhaps less likely to be easing themselves into retirement.

“Our recent research² found that 40% of 55 to 74-year-olds who retired early did so due to health or physical problems with a further 18% made redundant and unable to find new employment. Fewer than one in five (17%) said they retired earlier than expected because they felt their pensions and savings were enough to stop working.

“It is very worrying if many of those who are seeking jobs in their pre-retirement years are only able to find zero-hours contracts which don’t offer the wage security they are looking for.”

Enquiries

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Notes to Editors:

References

- 1- ONS, Labour market statistics, January 2020: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/uk-labour-market-statistics-january-2020>
- 2- [Early retirees three times more likely to be forced to give up work than choose to](#): Research conducted by Opinium via a survey of 1,607 retired or semi-retired UK residents aged over 55 years old between 26 November 2019 and 4 December 2019

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