

## We're increasingly a part time work force, but that's n...

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As is becoming increasingly apparent from news reports, the UK is becoming a nation of part time workers. [As the BBC noted yesterday:](#)

*ONS data revealed that 1.46 million people were working part-time because they could not find a full-time job, an increase of 24,000 over the quarter and the highest figure since records began in 1992.*

*Almost a third of working men are in part-time employment because they cannot find a full-time job, compared with 13% of women.*

Curiosity made me wonder about the accuracy of this data, so I did an FoI request to enquire about the source of the information. The original is here. The slightly edited response (removing some jargon) is:

**1. Might you please supply documentation that shows how the ONS define self-employment?**

***Estimates of self-employment published by the ONS are sourced from the Labour Force Survey (LFS). The LFS is a household survey and respondents who have established that one hours paid work has been undertaken in the past week ('the reference week') are asked questions relating to their employment status, via the following questions:***

***Did you do any paid work in the 7 days ending Sunday the [date], either as an employee or as self-employed?***

**2 Yes**

**2 No**

**APPLIES IF ANSWER = 1**

***Were you working as an employee or were you self-employed?***

**1 Employee**

**2 Self-employed**

**3 Government scheme**

**4 Unpaid family worker**

***The definition of self-employment is based on the respondents view of the***

**type of work they do.**

**2. How is full time and part time self-employment differentiated by the ONS?  
Please supply documentary evidence of the methodologies used.**

As with establishing employment status, full-time and part-time status is self classified by the respondent via the following question:

In your main job were you working...

1 Full time

2 Or part time

The definition of full- or part-time employment is based on the respondents view of the amount of work they do. It is not related to the hours worked during the reference week.

So, the fact this is a perceptions index, not a matter of fact.

And the perception really is that people think they are working part time or this fact would not be recorded.

It's not a wholly reliable way to deliver data, but over time is probably consistent in its trend data. But that comment at the end is important: part time work is not defined by the hours actually worked, which will surprise most people, I suspect.