
Chair of the UK Statistics Authority, Sir David Norgrove

Rt Hon Boris Johnson MP
Prime Minister
10 Downing Street
London SW1A 2AA
(by email)

24 February 2022

Dear Prime Minister,

You said at Prime Minister's Questions yesterday that there are now more people in employment than before the pandemic began.

According to the latest ONS figures, it is wrong to claim that there are now more people in work than before the pandemic began: the increase in the number of people who are on payrolls is more than offset by the reduction in the number of people who are self-employed. The number of people in work is estimated to be around 600,000 fewer than at the start of the pandemic (comparing December 2019 – February 2020 with October – December 2021)¹

If, as seems to be the case, your statement referred only to the increase in the number of people on payrolls, it would be a selective use of data that is likely to give a misleading impression of trends in the labour market unless that distinction is carefully explained.

The distinction has been highlighted by the ONS when they published the most recent labour market figures, as well as in the media, in Parliament, and in a letter of 1 February from the Authority's Director General for Regulation to 10 Downing Street's Chief Analyst².

I hope you will agree that public trust requires a complete statement of this important measure of the economy.

Yours sincerely,



Sir David Norgrove

¹ [Employment in the UK: February 2022](#), Office for National Statistics, 15 February 2022

² [Ed Humpherson to Laura Gilbert: Statements on the number of people in work](#), Office for Statistics Regulation, 1 February 2022