

# Skills Insights Note 2026-2

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## Cross Border Skills and Commonalities between Ireland and Northern Ireland



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# Background

## Cross Border Skills and Commonalities between Ireland and Northern Ireland

- The Skills Insights Notes are a series of new shorter pieces of work on topical matters affecting the labour market by the Expert Group on Future Skills Needs (EGFSN) launched in 2025. These Notes are prepared alongside longer research studies, that the EGFSN also undertakes. All Insights Notes can be accessed here: [EGFSN Publications](#). This Note is the second in the series in 2026 and focuses on cross border skills and commonalities between Ireland and Northern Ireland. Specifically, this paper highlights cross-border workers, sectoral breakdowns, education, and skills forecasts.
- The Expert Group on Future Skills Needs (EGFSN) advises the Government on future skills requirements and associated labour market issues that impact on the national potential for enterprise and employment growth. The latest EGFSN publications can be found at: [www.egfsn.ie](http://www.egfsn.ie).
- This Skills Insights Note has been issued by the Chair, Colm Kelly, and was prepared by Ciara Cowap of the EGFSN Secretariat and Hugh Creaton of the Labour Market and Skills Unit in the Department of Enterprise, Tourism and Employment. For further information, please contact: [info@EGFSN.ie](mailto:info@EGFSN.ie).
- The authors would like to thank the Members of the EGFSN for their helpful comments and valuable feedback on provisional drafts, which greatly contributed to the improvement of this work.



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### Key Takeaways



1. Shared Skills Priorities between Ireland and Northern Ireland
2. Increased Cross Border Working
3. Commonalities across Sectors of Employment and Education

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**Disclaimer:** The views expressed herein are those of the authors and do not reflect the views of the Minister or Department of Enterprise, Tourism and Employment. All errors and omissions are our own.

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## Introduction

This Skills Insight Note examines cross border commonalities between Ireland and Northern Ireland in particular focusing on labour market comparisons covering cross border workers, the dominant sectors of employment and educational differences. In addition, the skills related objectives and commitments in the Programmes for Government in both of these jurisdictions are analysed.<sup>1,2</sup> The motivation for this cross-border comparison stems from similar skills objectives across digital skills, the green economy and apprenticeships in the Programmes for Government of Northern Ireland and Ireland. The release of this skills note provides a timely opportunity to assess both government's progress on skills development in each jurisdiction utilising the findings from the recently released joint census publication of Ireland and Northern Ireland.

In July 2025, the Central Statistics Office (CSO) in Ireland and the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA) published findings from the most recent census<sup>3</sup> in each jurisdiction. The granularity of census data is key to facilitating this cross-border worker comparison. One drawback is the frequency of the collected data (every 5 years in Ireland and 10 years in Northern Ireland) and the timeframe within which the census is conducted. The census results presented here relate to 2021/22. However, there is a ten-year period between the currently available and last joint census publications which allows for an insight into the development of these jurisdictions over a longer period.

Some of the notable demographic findings from this joint census publication show:

- *The population of the island of Ireland was 7.1 million people in 2022, an increase of 26% since 2002 and the first time the population has exceeded 7 million since 1851.*
- *Over the twenty-year period to 2022, the population in Ireland increased by 31% and by 13% in Northern Ireland.*
- *The population density of Northern Ireland (141 people per km<sup>2</sup>) was twice that of Ireland (73 people per km<sup>2</sup>).*

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1 [programme-for-government-securing-irelands-future.pdf](#)

2 [Our Plan: Doing What Matters Most](#)

3 [Key Findings Ireland and Northern Ireland - A Joint Census Publication 2021-2022 - Central Statistics Office](#) published on 2<sup>nd</sup> July 2025.

An important caveat when conducting analysis comparing Ireland and Northern Ireland as noted by the Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI) is the distinct structural differences between the two economies, as Northern Ireland is, “a regional part of the overall UK economy” whereas Ireland is, “a national level economy, and an EU Member State”.<sup>4</sup> This should be borne in mind in any of the economic and demographic comparisons between Ireland and Northern Ireland.

The joint census report brings together a multitude of statistics from Ireland and Northern Ireland allowing for comparisons of trends, similarities and differences. The topics analysed within the report include demographics, households, ethnicity, place of birth, religion, health, carers, labour force and housing. The focus of this note is primarily on the demographic, labour market and skills comparisons between Ireland and Northern Ireland. In addition, information on skills developments and forecasts is gathered from government publications.

This first section of this Skills Insight Note provides an overview of the labour markets of Ireland and Northern Ireland focusing on developments over the period 2010-2024, updating the census numbers with the latest available data. The second section of the note focuses on cross border workers and provides illustrative insights into these workers across age, commuting patterns and sectors of employment. The third and fourth sections investigate broad employment and education trends across both jurisdictions. The final section discusses the shared and distinct skills needs of both jurisdictions as highlighted by each Government in their respective Programmes for Government.

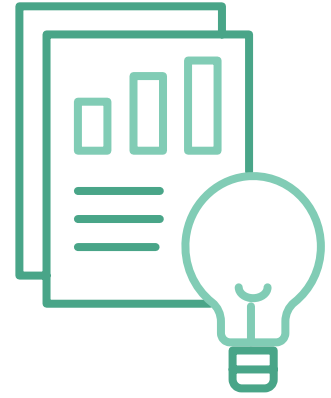
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4 [Assessing economic trends in Ireland and Northern Ireland | ESRI \(2025\) p.8](#)

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# 1. Labour Market Overview

There were almost **2.9 million** people aged 15 and over in the labour force in Ireland and more than **935,000** people aged 16 and over in the labour force in Northern Ireland in 2024. Table 1 compares a range of demographic and labour market indicators for the two jurisdictions and the change in these from 2010 to 2024. Some striking developments over this period include:



- **Population growth** in Ireland was over 2.5 times larger than Northern Ireland, with the population in Ireland increasing by nearly 18%, relative to almost 7% in Northern Ireland over this period. In nominal terms, the population in Ireland increased by 803k persons compared to population growth of 123k persons in Northern Ireland.
- **Migration flows** into Ireland and Northern Ireland are of starkly different magnitudes. Migration flows in Northern Ireland have remained largely stable with immigration increasing by 15% and emigration down 4%. Ireland on the other hand has seen immigration increase by over 3.5 times (350%)<sup>5</sup> and emigration increased marginally by 1%. Despite the difference in the scale of the figures, net inward migration has increased fourfold in both jurisdictions over this period.
- **Employment rates** in Ireland for the most part saw a larger increase compared to Northern Ireland particularly for those aged 25-34 years. However, in 2024, average employment rates in both jurisdictions for those aged 15/16-64 years are near identical at c.74%.
- Although **participation rates** in the respective labour markets increased by similar amounts (c.3 percentage points) over the period, participation rates in Ireland (65.8%) remained elevated relative to those recorded in Northern Ireland (62.6%) in 2024. Participation rates for Northern Ireland have been calculated based on NISRA economic activity rates.
- **Unemployment rates** fell sharply in both jurisdictions over this period. It is important to consider the broader economic context: Ireland was hit particularly hard by the Global Financial Crisis and entered 2010 with significantly higher unemployment than Northern Ireland. Consequently, Ireland recorded substantial reductions in unemployment across age groups in the years after the crisis and in the recovery period that followed.

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5 It is important to note that 2010 recorded the lowest levels of immigration and 2024 had the highest levels of immigration in Ireland over this period. As such, this 350% increase is the largest difference between two years in this timeframe. The average rate of immigration over this period was c.86k persons. Immigration in 2010 was 52% below this average level whilst immigration in 2024 was 73% above the average.

**Table 1: Demographic and Labour Market Indicators, 2010 & 2024**

					NI change	Ire change
	2010	2024	2010	2024	2010-2024	2010-2024
<b>Population (in thousands)</b>	<b>Northern Ireland</b>		<b>Ireland</b>		<b>Northern Ireland</b>	<b>Ireland</b>
<15	355	359	953	1,013	4	60
15-64	1,190	1,220	3,086	3,512	30	426
>65	260	349	510	827	89	317
Total	1,805	1,928	4,549	5,352	123	803
<b>Population (% of total)</b>	<b>NI</b>	<b>NI</b>	<b>Ire</b>	<b>Ire</b>	<b>NI</b>	<b>Ire</b>
<15	20%	18.6%	21%	18.9%	-0.01 pp	-0.02 pp
15-64	66%	63.3%	68%	65.6%	-0.03 pp	-0.02pp
>65	14%	18.1%	11%	15.5%	0.04 pp	0.04 pp
<b>Migration <sup>6</sup> (in thousands)</b>	<b>NI</b>	<b>NI</b>	<b>Ire</b>	<b>Ire</b>	<b>NI</b>	<b>Ire</b>
Immigration	24.5	28.2	41.8	149.2	3.7	107.4
Emigration	23.4	22.5	69.2	69.9	-0.9	0.7
Net Migration	1.2	5.8	-27.4	79.3	4.6	106.7
<b>Employment rates (%)<sup>7</sup></b>	<b>NI</b>	<b>NI</b>	<b>Ire</b>	<b>Ire</b>	<b>NI</b>	<b>Ire</b>
15/16-64 <sup>8</sup>	65.8	74.3	60.95	74.45	8.5 pp	13.5 pp
15/16-24	44.1	53.5	38.7	47.9	9.4 pp	9.2 pp
25-34	78.4	83.1	70.9	83.9	4.7 pp	13.1 pp
<b>Participation rates (%)<sup>9</sup></b>	<b>NI</b>	<b>NI</b>	<b>Ire</b>	<b>Ire</b>	<b>NI</b>	<b>Ire</b>
15/16 years and over	59.6	62.6	62.6	65.8	2.8 pp	3.2 pp
15/16-24	54.2	56.1	53.9	53.6	1.9 pp	-0.3 pp
25-34	84.8	85.1	83.5	88.3	0.3 pp	4.8 pp
<b>Unemployment rates (%)</b>	<b>NI</b>	<b>NI</b>	<b>Ire</b>	<b>Ire</b>	<b>NI</b>	<b>Ire</b>
15/16 years and over	7.0	1.8	14.5	4.3	-5.2 pp	-10.2 pp
15/16-24	18.6	4.7	28.1	10.6	-13.9 pp	-17.4 pp
25-34	7.5	2.2	15.2	5.0	-5.3 pp	-10.2 pp

Source: ESRI (2025), NISRA, CSO

6 Note the annual migration statistics in Northern Ireland run from the start of July to June of each year whilst the migration statistics in Ireland run from the start of April to the end of April the following year.

7 The unadjusted employment rates are used in this table.

8 15 and 16 years old are used interchangeably here due to different age bracket classifications in Ireland and Northern Ireland.

9 The economic activity rate is defined as the percentage of all working age (16 to 64) people who are economically active.

## 2. Cross Border Workers

The number of cross-border workers is low with cross border workers representing 0.3% and 1.2% of the labour force in Ireland and Northern Ireland respectively in 2021/2022. However, the difficulty in trying to measure cross border worker numbers is acknowledged. Previous independent reports have highlighted the high level of unofficial cross border workers due to compliance issues arising from working and living between the two jurisdictions.<sup>10</sup>

In 2021/2022, there were 7,777 people travelling from Ireland to work in Northern Ireland and there were 10,541 people travelling to work in the opposite direction from Northern Ireland to Ireland (up at least 62%<sup>11</sup> from the 2011 Census). Given that the population is smaller in Northern Ireland, this likely reflects greater labour market opportunities and higher wages in Ireland.<sup>12</sup>



**Table 2: Cross-border Commuters, Ireland and Northern Ireland**

	Ireland		Northern Ireland	
	2011	2022	2011	2021
<b>Reason for cross-border commuting</b>	Work or study	Work only	Work or study	Work only
<b>No. of cross-border commuters</b>	8,300	7,777	6,500	10,541
<b>Cross-border commuters as a proportion of the Population (%)</b>	0.2	0.2	0.4	0.6

**Note:** The 2011 cross border commuter figures include those travelling for work or study. The 2021/2022 figures relate to cross border commuters travelling for work only.

Source: CSO & NISRA

<sup>10</sup> A study into the current conditions of the island of Ireland labour market, and challenges and opportunities for effective operation for workers and businesses across the island, by Maureen O'Reilly, Anmarie O'Kane, Rose Tierney and Anne Devlin. Available here: [All-island-labour-market-study-2024.pdf](#)

<sup>11</sup> In the 2011 Census, those travelling to and from Ireland and Northern Ireland included those who commute for work and study. A breakdown of this figure for those travelling separately for work and study is not available. As such, the 62% estimate for the increase in the number of cross border commuters travelling for work from Northern Ireland actually underrepresents the real increase due to the inclusion of those travelling for study in this year. The corresponding change over this period cannot be calculated for Ireland as we do not have the split between those travelling for work and study in 2011.

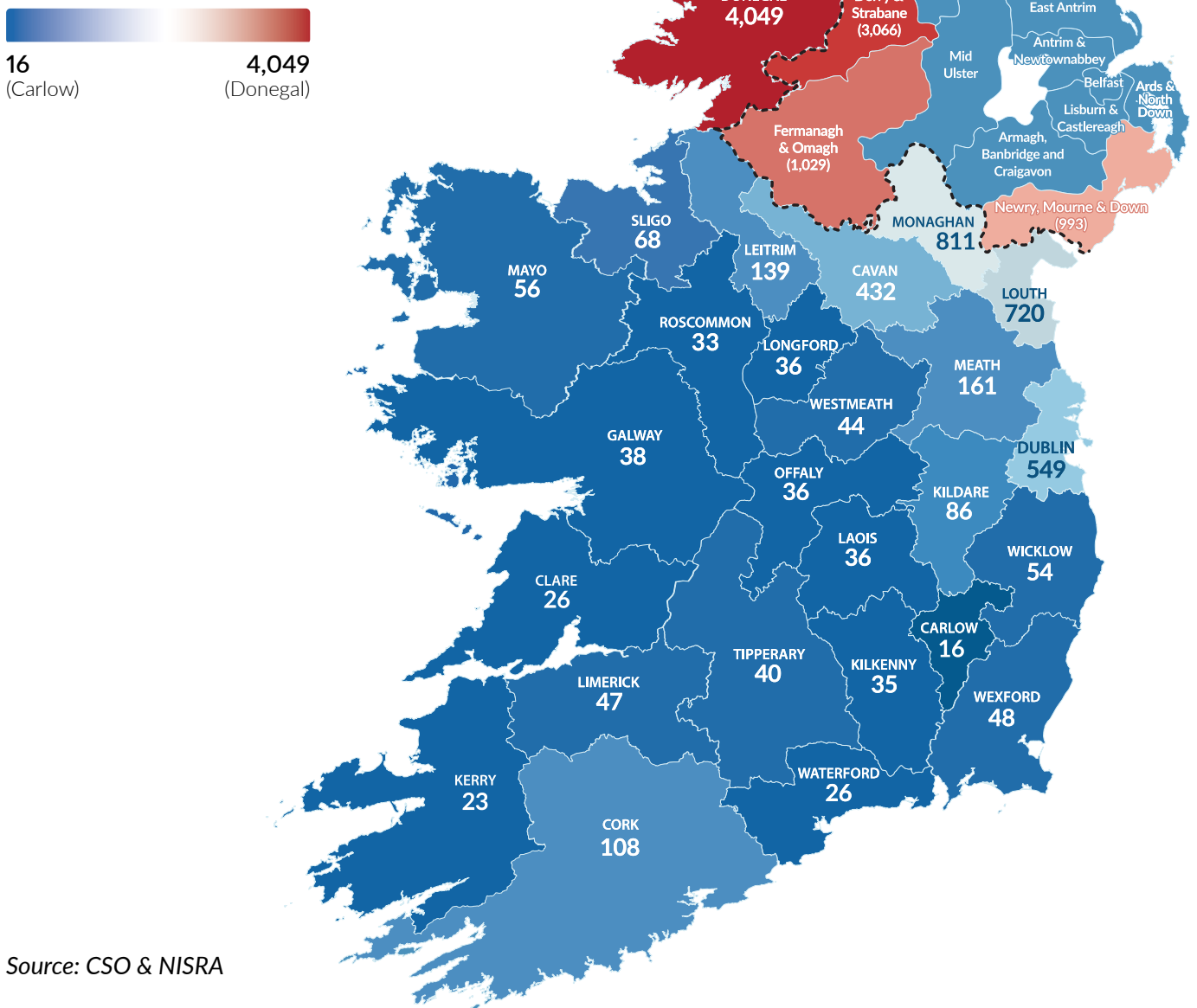
<sup>12</sup> There are similar [cross border flows](#) between Denmark and Sweden over the Øresund bridge connecting the cities of Copenhagen and Malmo.

As a proportion of the total population, there were three times as many workers commuting to work in Ireland from Northern Ireland compared to cross border workers from Ireland to Northern Ireland in 2021/22. There was also a higher proportion of workers commuting from Northern Ireland in 2021/22 compared to 2011.

Unsurprisingly, the top three counties in Ireland where cross-border workers were living were situated along the border namely Donegal (4,049), Monaghan (811) and Louth (720). Of those commuting to Northern Ireland for work, the majority were located in Donegal (52%) followed by Monaghan (10%) and Louth (9%) as displayed in Figure 1.

**Figure 1: Number of Irish Residents Commuting to Work in Northern Ireland, 2022**

Irish resident cross border workers



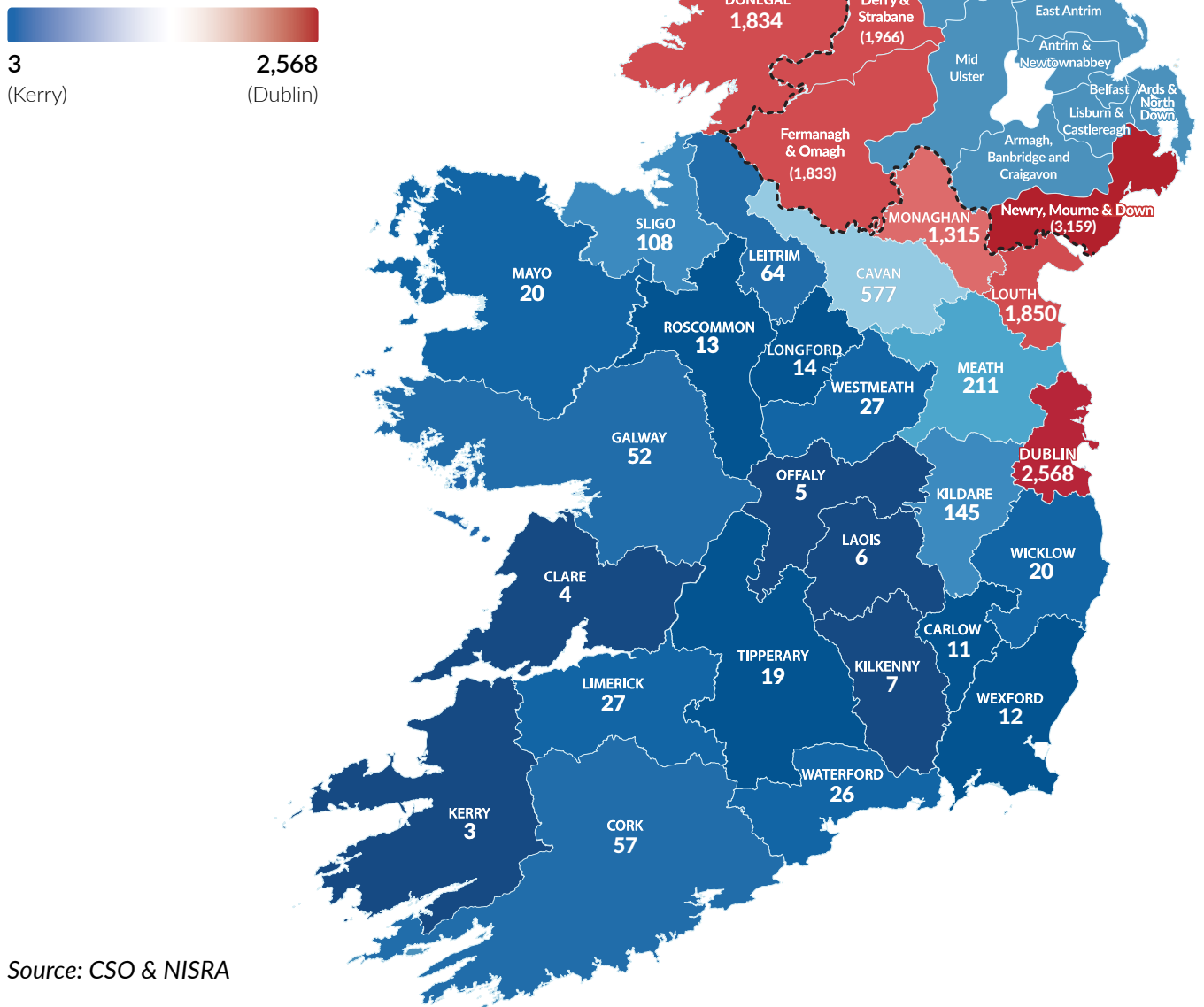
Source: CSO & NISRA

The top two local government districts in Northern Ireland that workers from Ireland were travelling to are those that border Donegal namely Derry and Strabane (3,066 workers) and Fermanagh and Omagh (1,029 workers). There were also strong flows of workers living in Ireland working in the Newry, Mourne and Down district (993) as highlighted in Figure 1.

The top three counties in Ireland where cross-border workers from Northern Ireland were travelling to for employment were Dublin (2,568 commuters), Louth (1,850) and Donegal (1,834) as displayed in Figure 2. For workers travelling from Northern Ireland to work in Ireland, the top places of origin were similar to those commuting from Ireland as highlighted in Figure 2 namely Newry, Mourne and Down (3,159), Derry and Strabane (1,966) and Fermanagh and Omagh (1,883).

**Figure 2: NI Residents Commuting to Work in Ireland, 2022**

NI resident cross border workers



Source: CSO & NISRA

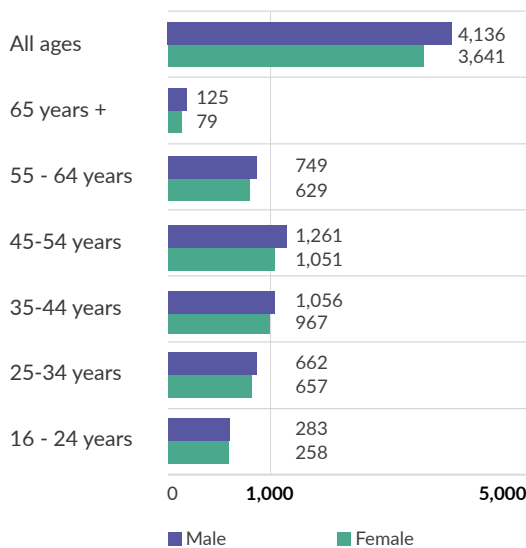
In terms of the demographic make-up of cross border workers, there are some interesting differences. Cross-border workers travelling from Ireland to Northern Ireland had an older age profile, with the highest proportion of commuters belonging to the 45-to-54-year age group (30%). In contrast, cross-border commuters from Northern Ireland were more likely to be younger with 29% in both the 25-to-34 and 35-to-44-year age groups.

Furthermore, cross-border workers travelling from Ireland to Northern Ireland were more likely to be male (53%) than female (47%). In the opposite direction there was an even greater difference with just under two thirds of workers from Northern Ireland being male.

Previous research has shown that the education profile of cross border workers from Ireland and Northern Ireland tends to be higher than the levels reported in the general populations of both jurisdictions with 75 per cent of cross border workers reporting third-level qualifications (McGuinness et al., 2024).<sup>13</sup> Additionally, a large cohort of cross border workers report holding professional or managerial occupations (McGuinness et al., 2024).

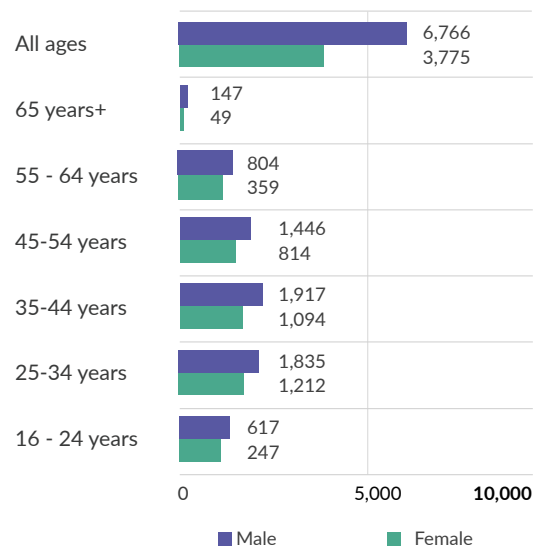
**Figure 3A: Age Breakdown of Irish Residents Commuting to Work in Northern Ireland, 2021/22**

**Workers from Ireland Commuting to NI**



**Figure 3B: Age Breakdown of Northern Irish Residents Commuting to Work in Ireland, 2021/22**

**Workers from NI Commuting to Ireland**

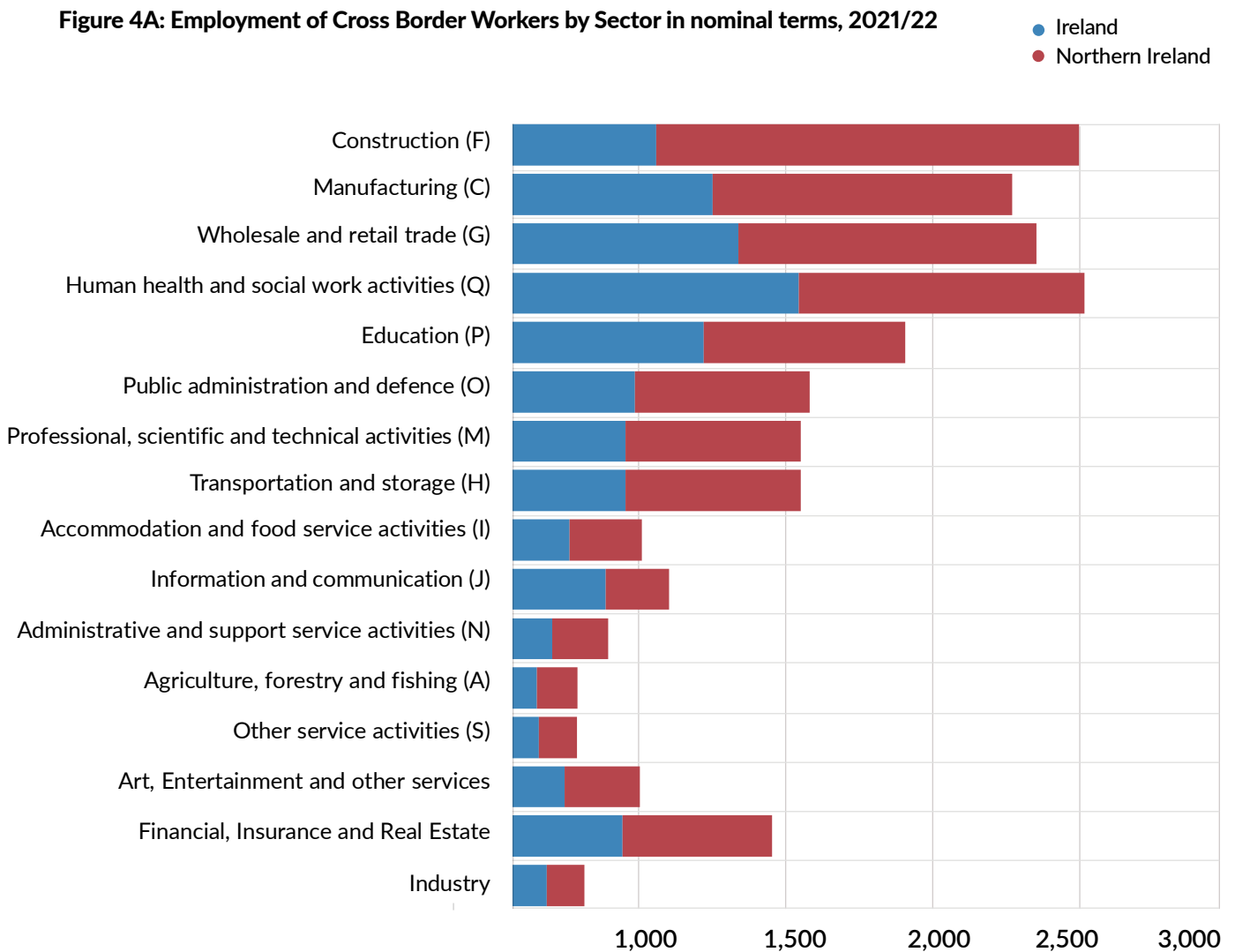


Source: CSO & NISRA

<sup>13</sup> [esri.ie/system/files/publications/WP781.pdf](https://esri.ie/system/files/publications/WP781.pdf)

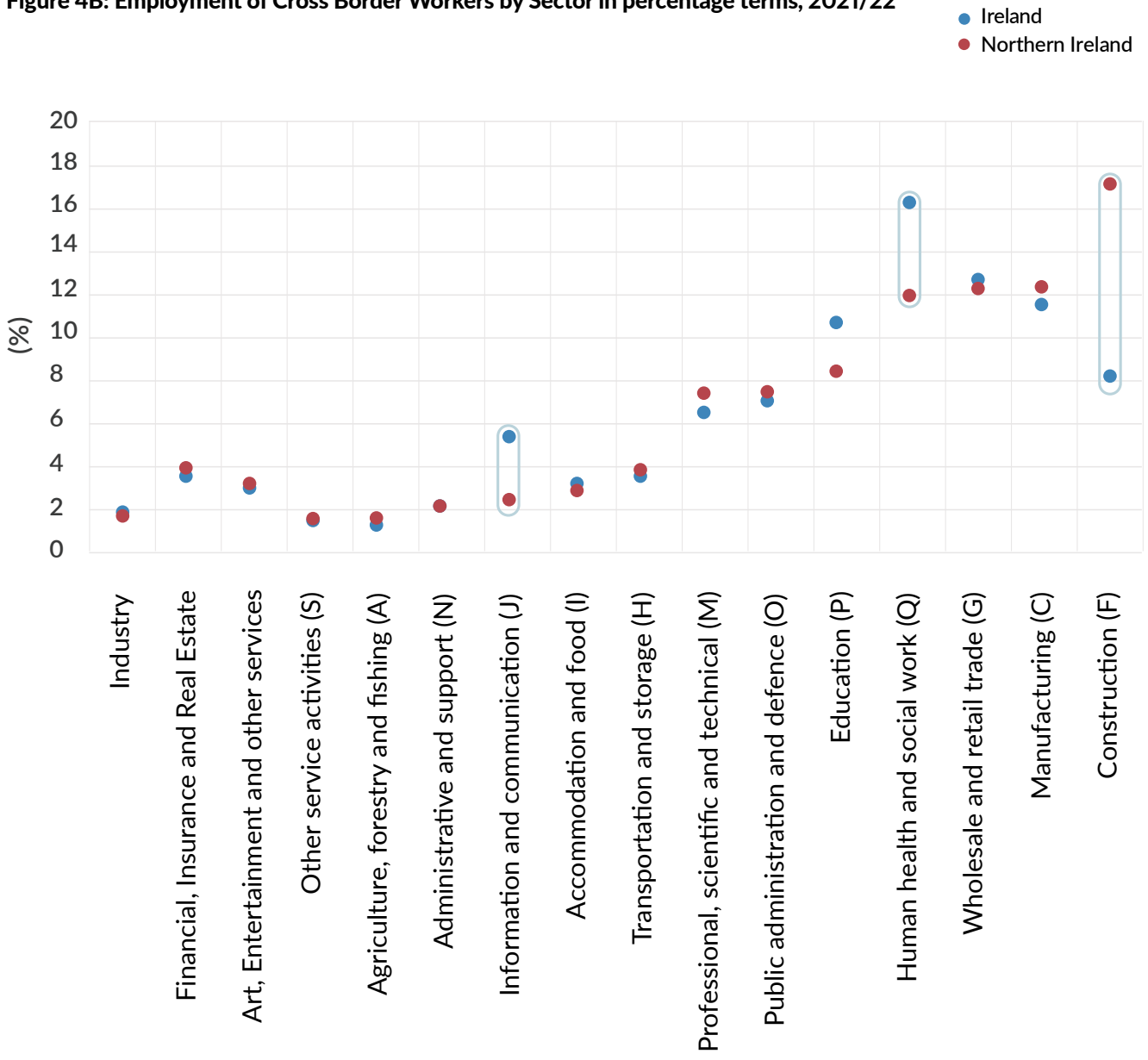
There were large numbers of cross border commuters from Northern Ireland employed in construction, manufacturing, and wholesale and retail and human health and social work (Figure 4A). The largest sectoral disparity among cross border workers is in construction, where almost 18% work in this sector compared to just over 8% of workers from Ireland (Figure 4B). Conversely, there is a higher share of cross border workers in health and social work activities from Ireland (16%) compared to those from Northern Ireland (12%). Additionally, there are higher shares of cross border workers from Ireland working in the ICT and education sectors.

**Figure 4A: Employment of Cross Border Workers by Sector in nominal terms, 2021/22**

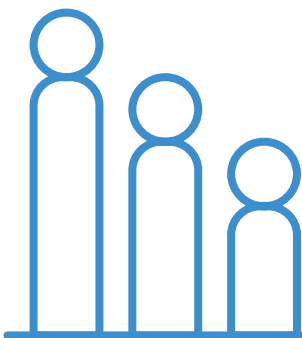


Source: CSO & NISRA

Figure 4B: Employment of Cross Border Workers by Sector in percentage terms, 2021/22



Source: CSO & NISRA

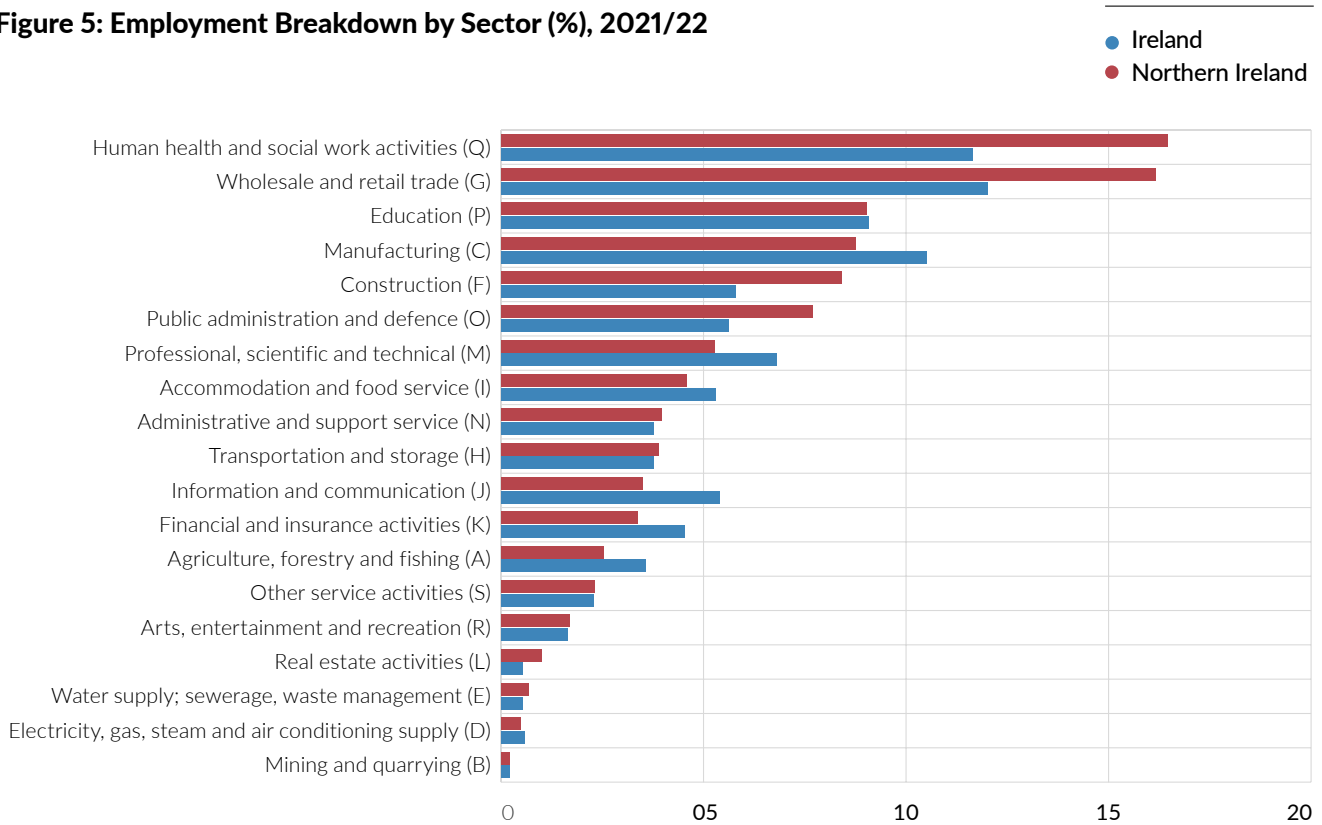


### 3. Employment Comparison by Sector



The sectoral makeup of overall employment in Ireland and Northern Ireland is quite distinct, as demonstrated by Figure 5.<sup>14</sup> Both jurisdictions rely heavily on wholesale and retail, healthcare and manufacturing. In Ireland, these three sectors account for just over one third of all jobs. In Northern Ireland, the equivalent figure is 41%. The main differences between the two jurisdictions are the higher share of workers in the services sector in Ireland driven by ICT and Finance and Insurance as well as the greater proportion of those employed in public sector type roles in Northern Ireland. NACE sectors O, P and Q (Public administration, Education and Health) largely public sector roles<sup>15</sup> account for one third of all jobs in Northern Ireland compared to one quarter in Ireland. Northern Ireland has a higher proportion of employment in the construction sector (c.8%), and as previously highlighted, this is also the largest sector for cross border workers coming from Northern Ireland.<sup>16</sup>

**Figure 5: Employment Breakdown by Sector (%), 2021/22**



Source: CSO & NISRA

14 'Industry Not Stated' accounts for 6.34% in Ireland and 0% in Northern Ireland

15 It should be noted that these sectors also account for private sector employment and are not a perfect representation of the public sector.

16 There was no occupational level data available in the joint census publication.

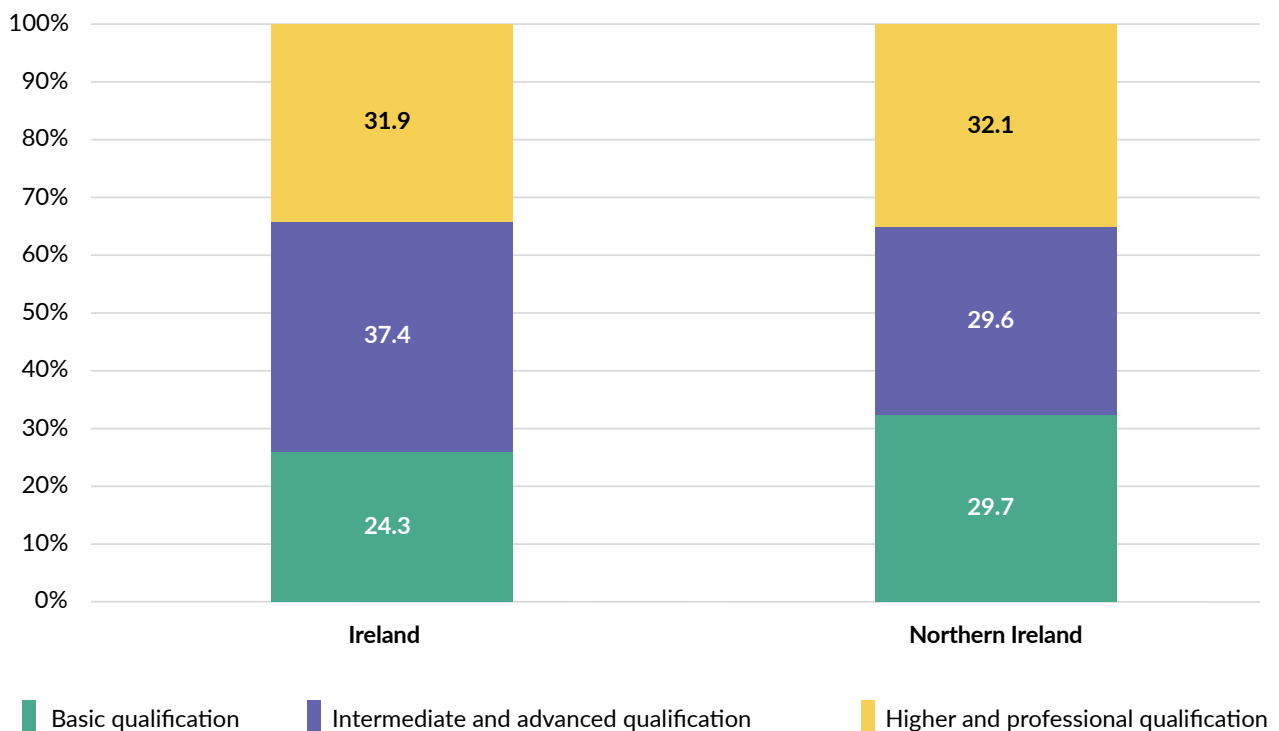
## 4. Education



The joint census publication also examined education levels and highlighted some very interesting comparative findings, as presented in Figure 6.

<sup>17</sup> A higher and professional qualification was held by 31.9% of the Irish population, compared to 32.1% of the Northern Irish population. An intermediate and advanced qualification was the highest education level for 37% of people in Ireland and 30% in Northern Ireland. In Ireland, 24% of the population had a basic qualification as their highest level of education, compared to 30% in Northern Ireland.

**Figure 6: Level of Education of usual residents aged 15/16 and over, 2021/22**

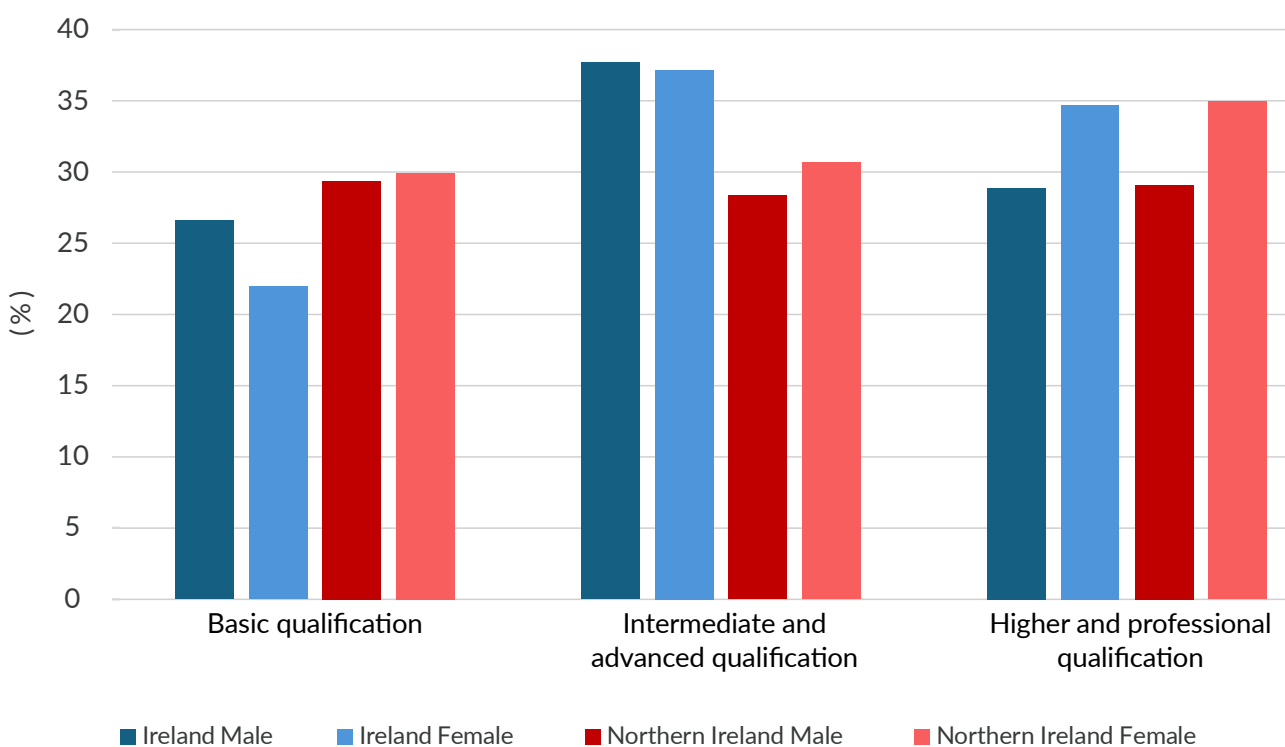


Source: CSO & NISRA

<sup>17</sup> The education and qualification systems in Ireland and Northern Ireland differ considerably and as such the CSO and NISRA conducted a mapping exercise to ensure comparability between the two Censuses. The comparative level of education and qualification under each of these classifications is shown in Appendix 1.

While the gender difference for those with an intermediate and advanced qualification is broadly similar, deviations are apparent for basic qualifications as well as higher and professional qualifications with females ahead of males. For basic qualifications, in Northern Ireland both males and females have similar rates. However, in Ireland 27% of males in the population report a basic qualification as their highest level of education, compared to 22% of females. For higher and professional qualifications, women in Ireland and Northern Ireland take up a larger proportion at 35%, while 29% of males in both jurisdictions hold this qualification.

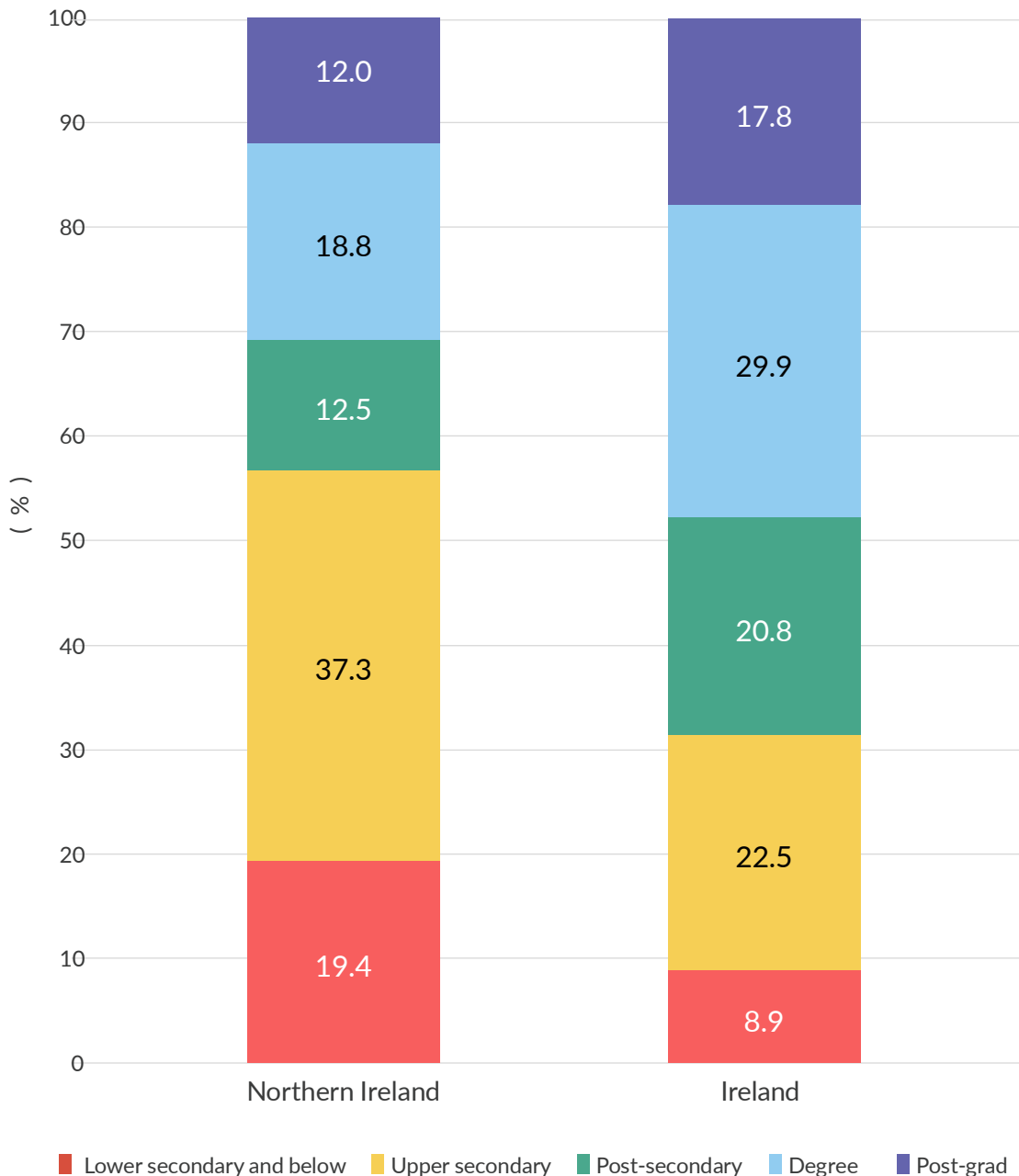
**Figure 7: Level of education of usual residents aged 15/16 and over by sex 2021/22**



Source: CSO and NISRA

Recent Labour Force Survey data shows how the composition of qualifications in Ireland and Northern Ireland has changed over time. Larger proportions of the population in Ireland have degrees and post-graduate degrees compared to Northern Ireland. In Ireland 47.7% of the population has a degree or higher compared to 30.8% in Northern Ireland.

**Figure 8: Qualification Profile of Ireland and Northern Ireland 2025, 20-64 years**

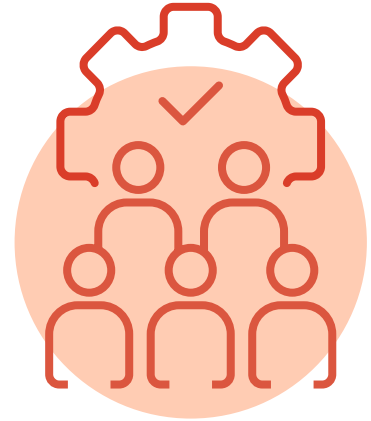


Source: Ulster University Economic Policy Centre and Dublin City University using Labour Force Survey Data

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## 5. Skills Needs Identification Across Ireland and Northern Ireland

The PEACEPLUS initiative is driving significant progress in cross-border skills development across Ireland and Northern Ireland, with investments aimed at improving education, training and socio-economic regeneration.<sup>18</sup> In 2024, more than €46 million was awarded to expand learning opportunities, upskill 10,000 people in key growth sectors, and support cross-border partnerships.<sup>19</sup> These objectives are governed through initiatives such as the Southeast Higher Education/ Further Education/ Industry Cross-Border Alliance, digital and cybersecurity training programmes, and green skills development schemes. Additionally, €19 million has been invested to improve cross-border collaboration in areas such as skills mobility, public health, emergency planning, and labour market alignment. Projects include the Cross-Border Collaboration to Activate the Skills Ecosystem (C-CASE), Public Health Knowledge Hub (PHKH), and North South ESTEEM.<sup>20</sup>



Recently a bilateral meeting took place between the National Skills Council (NSC) and the Northern Ireland Skills Council (NISC). This meeting provided an opportunity for both groups to share information about their work and to discuss the potential for future collaboration on an all-Ireland basis. Green skills were identified as a priority area where the two councils could coordinate efforts and engage jointly going forward.<sup>21</sup>

In Ireland, following a period of strong economic growth and record rates of inward migration, there has been an increasing focus on the supply side of the labour market and skills needs. The EGFSN is very cognisant of the demands on the labour market going forward and takes periodic and detailed looks at specific sectors in the Irish economy.

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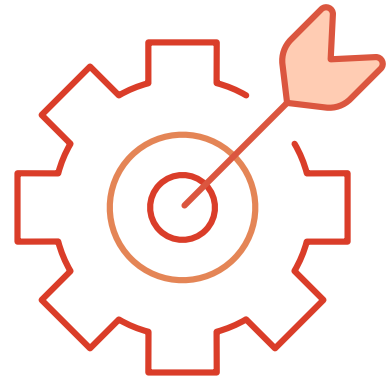
18 [Programme Overview | SEUPB](#)

19 [More than €46m of PEACEPLUS funding awarded to improve equal access to inclusive and quality services in education, training and lifelong learning across Northern Ireland and the border counties of Ireland | SEUPB](#)

20 [€19 million in PEACEPLUS funding awarded to projects to strengthen cross-border collaboration across island of Ireland | SEUPB](#)

21 <https://www.gov.ie/en/department-of-further-and-higher-education-research-innovation-and-science/organisation-information/nsc/>

Much of the Expert Group's focus in recent years has been on supporting Ireland's transition to the new digital and green economies. The [Skills for Modern Methods of Construction](#) report (2024) highlights the importance of having the right skills to accelerate the adoption of MMC as a means of boosting housing supply and improving productivity and efficiency in the construction sector. Other studies in recent years have included the [Skills for Zero Carbon](#) (2021) showcasing the skills needed to support Ireland's climate action ambitions. [Building Future Skills](#) (2020) looked at the skills required to deliver on our housing, infrastructural development and climate change mitigation targets. The Expert Group have also studied [Skills for International Financial Services](#) (2024), [Skills for Biopharma](#) (2024), [SME Management Development in Ireland](#) (2020), design skills (2020), and transport and logistic skills (2015), highlighting the broad spectrum of skills explored over recent years. The EGFSN work programme for 2026 includes finalising and publishing studies examining both digital skills and semiconductors skills needs over the medium-term. Two further projects include work on assessing skills needs in transport and logistics as well as research on the tourism and hospitality sector in Ireland.



In Ireland, Solas have responsibility for Further Education and Training (FET) and conduct similar analysis for the future skills requirements in Ireland.<sup>22</sup> The Skills and Labour Market Research Unit (SLMRU) publish regular skills bulletins focusing on various issues, as well as a yearly National Skills Bulletin.<sup>23</sup> The latter outlines skills demand, and shortages across sectors and occupations which informs policy and provides evidence based research. Recent Skills Bulletins have analysed older workers, skills mismatch, green jobs and skills and job autonomy.

In Northern Ireland, the Skills Barometer series produced by Ulster University's Economic Policy Centre forecasts future skills needs in part to identify skills gaps. The series began in 2015, with updates every two years. The latest in the series is the fifth publication, which examines skills needs from 2023 to 2033.<sup>24</sup> Since the 2021 edition, there have been changes in methodology with a change in several data sources used for the forecasting model.

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<sup>22</sup> [Who We Are | Solas | Learning Works](#)

<sup>23</sup> [SOLAS | Skills and Labour Market Research Unit | Research](#)

<sup>24</sup> [Skills Barometer 2023 - 2033 | Department for the Economy](#)

The Skills Barometer covers topics including:

- supply and demand analysis of skills,
- skills (im)balances,
- careers information,
- insights from graduates and employers.

The Skills Barometer uses economic modelling for a baseline and high growth scenario, to forecast skills needs over a ten-year period. The demand for skills is forecast by sector, occupation, qualification level and subject area. Detailed forecasts are modelled, with demand forecast for 4-digit occupations (e.g. cyber security professionals, pharmaceutical technicians, project support officers). This is compared with forecasted supply from the education system and migration. (Im)balances are then identified to see where skills gaps may arise. This work in Northern Ireland highlights the need for more detailed occupational and sectoral forecasts to inform policy, something which SOLAS hopes to address later this year with a new forecasting model for Ireland.

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## Summary

Similarities in the Programmes for Government in both jurisdictions motivated an analysis of skills and commonalities between Ireland and Northern Ireland. An analysis of skills and labour market dynamics across Ireland and Northern Ireland reveals interesting insights. While some labour market factors differ between the two jurisdictions, there are several commonalities. Both economies continue to rely heavily on sectors such as health, retail, and education, while also preparing for future demands in digital and green skills. Skills forecasting efforts in each jurisdiction demonstrate a common commitment to anticipate change and address future skills gaps.



Cross-border commuting has grown significantly, with clear patterns in age, gender, and sectoral employment, reflecting strong economic links between the two jurisdictions. Although cross border commuters represent a small proportion of the total population in both jurisdictions, the increase in these flows highlights the interconnected nature of Ireland and Northern Ireland's labour markets on the island, and the importance of ongoing collaboration to meet shared challenges.

Later this year, the first results from a new wide ranging all-island survey on the labour market – the Working in Ireland Survey conducted by UCD - will also become available. This is a very important piece of work that has received funding from the Governments of both Ireland and Northern Ireland. This survey will shed further light on the labour markets and skills needs in both jurisdictions. The EGFSN will look to explore these topics in more detail once that information becomes available.

## Appendix

### Appendix 1 – Education and Qualification Classification Comparison

As well as a difference in qualification systems, the questions in the respective census' were different. In Ireland, the population was asked to “identify the highest level of education they had completed” and in Northern Ireland, “the census focused on qualifications held.”<sup>25</sup>

Classification Groups	Ireland	Northern Ireland
<b>Basic qualification</b>	No formal education / training, Primary education NFQ Levels 1 or 2, Lower Secondary NFQ Level 3 Junior/Inter/Group Certificate	No qualifications/Level 1: 1 to 4 GCSEs, O levels, CSEs (any grades); 1 AS level; NVQ level 1; or equivalent
<b>Intermediate and advanced qualification</b>	Upper Secondary NFQ Levels 4 or 5 Leaving Certificate, Technical or Vocational NFQ Levels 4 or 5  Advanced Certificate/Completed Apprenticeship NFQ Level 6, Higher Certificate NFQ level 6	Level 2: 5 or more GCSEs (A*-C or 9-4), O levels (passes) CSEs (grade 1); 1 A level, 2-3 AS Levels; NVQ level 2, BTEC General, City and Guilds Craft; or equivalent  Level 3: 2 or more A Levels, 4 or more AS Levels; NVQ Level 3, BTEC National, OND, ONC, City and Guilds Advanced Craft; or equivalent
<b>Higher and professional qualification</b>	Ordinary Bachelor NFQ level 7 up to Doctorate NFQ level 10	Level 4 and above: Degree (BA, BSc), foundation degree, NVQ Level 4 and above, HND, HNC, professional qualifications (teaching or nursing, for example); or equivalent
<b>Other qualification</b>		Other: Other qualifications, equivalent unknown; Apprenticeship
<b>Qualification not stated</b>	Not stated	

Source: CSO & NISRA

<sup>25</sup> [Background Notes Ireland and Northern Ireland - A Joint Census Publication 2021-2022 - Central Statistics Office](#) – Education - Qualifications