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Foreword

The purpose of this paper, which is the third of its kind, is to provide up-to-date, robust information on cross border activity in the Ireland – Northern Ireland region and build upon the 2019 EURES Ireland/Northern Ireland Cross-Border Partnership report “Cross Border Labour Market Movement and Skills Gaps on the Island of Ireland”, and the 2020 report “Labour Market Movement and Skills Gaps on the Island of Ireland”. In line with best practice, information has been gained from the reputable sources that provide such information, primarily the Central Statistics Office (CSO) in the Republic of Ireland, the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA) in Northern Ireland, with additional data coming from EUROSTAT and the Office for National Statistics (ONS).

From the information provided by CSO and NISRA we have produced a report we hope will support jobseekers, workers and employers in the region as well as providing a focus for the EURES Cross Border Partnership regarding the direction of travel for our partnership and where we can use our resources most effectively in the coming years.

In a wider context and as part of the EURES Cross Border Network, the information we are providing will be useful in a comparative context to other border regions across the European Union and further afield. This will assist Cross Border Partnerships to analyse the mobility flows and hopefully provide some solutions to the issues faced by jobseekers, workers and employers in the border regions.

The primary challenge in producing a report like this is that there is no one complete and definitive data source that records the number and purpose of all cross-border movements between Ireland and Northern Ireland (indeed all border regions face the same issues) and the exact number of people that cross the border to work or study is difficult to quantify. The sources used in this paper are mainly CSO and NISRA and the information they produce, as well as a survey we have carried out in conjunction with our partners in the Chambers of Commerce. As such, it is important to emphasise that, throughout this report we use the most up-to-date data available in each jurisdiction. This means that, on occasion, the most recent data from each jurisdiction may cover slightly different time periods. For example, the population estimates for Northern Ireland come from NISRA’s June 2020 report (published in June 2021¹) and for the Republic of Ireland they come from the CSO’s April 2021 report (published in August 2021²). We have taken the decision that it is optimal to use the most up-to-date data and contextualise it in terms of any temporal disparities, rather than use out-of-date data for the sake of easy direct comparison.

We hope, given the success of the EURES Ireland/Northern Ireland Cross-Border Partnership 2019 and 2020 reports, this will continue to be a useful template. The information provided in the paper will continue to be replicated in the coming years and help us provide further analysis and ultimately support to those who work, seek work or employ in the border regions of the island of Ireland.

¹ NISRA, “[2020 Mid-year Population Estimates for Northern Ireland](#)”, (June 2021).

² CSO, “[Population and Migration Estimates, April 2021](#)”, (August 2021).

It is estimated that thousands of people cross the border between Ireland and Northern Ireland for work, and it is commonplace for individuals to switch between the two jurisdictions many times during their working lives. Employers use staff from both sides of the border to fill their vacancies and jobseekers look to the other side of the border for vacancies which may suit them. This happens not only in the border regions of Ireland but at borders across the European Union.

The Border region in Ireland has been and remains under a tremendous focus since the UK decision to leave the EU was agreed following the referendum. This focus has intensified this last year as the transition period came to an end on the 31st December 2020 and the implementation (to greater or lesser extents) of the Northern Ireland Protocol has begun to take effect. As Ireland shares the only land border with the UK, this continues to be of immediate relevance to those workers, employers, and jobseekers in the border region. This obviously causes apprehension for many as the final shape of Brexit and its impacts on the daily lives and business on the island of Ireland are still unfolding and very much in flux. These issues have been further complicated by the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic, the effects of which have had, and will continue to have, an impact on the lives of not just those who cross the border, but everyone on the island of Ireland and further afield. While it is still not possible, and may not be possible for some time, to fully comprehend the impact that Covid-19 has had on the Border Region, it is clear that support will be needed for cross border workers and employers as they look to continue to operate on a cross border basis. This report attempts to provide valuable data and context in helping to inform this need.

Executive Summary

This report provides up-to-date, tangible information on cross border activity in the Ireland – Northern Ireland border region and builds upon 2019’s EURES Ireland/Northern Ireland Cross-Border Partnership report “Cross Border Labour Market Movement and Skills Gaps on the Island of Ireland” and 2020’s report “Labour Market Movement and Skills Gaps on the Island of Ireland”. It is intended to assist the EURES Ireland/Northern Ireland Cross Border Partnership in supporting jobseekers, workers, and employers in the region, and to facilitate the Partnership in identifying the areas where it can employ its resources most effectively. In line with best practice, information has been gained from the reputable sources that provide such information, primarily the Central Statistics Office (CSO) in the Republic of Ireland, the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA) in Northern Ireland, EURSOTAT, and the Office for National Statistics (ONS).

Among the insights and reflections contained in this report, the following should be noted:

- Almost 20% (19.7%) of the population of the island of Ireland is resident in the Northern Ireland-Ireland border region, with a higher percentage of the population aged 0-16 than the overall percentage within the two jurisdictions.
- Close to 20% (19.2%) of registered businesses on the island of Ireland are located in the Northern Ireland-Ireland border region, with smaller businesses employing fewer than ten people predominating.
- In 2021 71% of all businesses in the agriculture, forestry and fishing sector in Northern Ireland were located within the five NUTS 3 areas adjoining the border (up 0.2% on 2020), which also contained 59.6% of all construction businesses, 47.3% of all transport and storage businesses, 55.5% of all production businesses, and 48.8% of all retail businesses. In contrast, the same areas only contained 26.9% of all information and communication businesses, 36.2% of all finance and insurance businesses, and 37.2% of all professional, scientific and technical businesses.
- The service sector continues to employ the largest number of people in the Northern Ireland-Ireland border region which is reflective of the island as a whole.
- The vast majority of businesses responding to the EURES Ireland-Northern Ireland Cross Border Partnership survey were located in the border region and 53.1% employed staff from the opposite jurisdiction.
- Among those businesses surveyed, the most frequent obstacle to recruitment in general was the lack of suitably skilled personnel, while for recruitment of cross-border workers it was wage expectations.
- Recurring themes in businesses’ responses to the survey were difficulties in attracting candidates with the necessary skills and qualifications along with wage expectations.
- The ongoing Covid-19 pandemic has meant the loss of income and business, the curtailment or alteration of normal business activities, staff absences and shortages due to Covid, and increased workload and costs.
- The EURES survey also revealed concerns regarding how the UK’s departure from the European Union was impacting on the timely delivery of supplies, increased logistical administrative burdens and associated costs, and decreased access to EU workers.

- All of the LGDs/NUTS 3 (The LGDs are unitary administrations responsible for all areas of local government)³ areas in Northern Ireland within the border region remain the most important sites in terms of cross-border labour mobility from Northern Ireland to the Republic of Ireland (North to South).
- The cross-border route between Derry & Strabane and Co. Donegal remains the most intensive for the mobility of labour, with the flow being stronger in numerical terms from Donegal to Derry & Strabane.
- Donegal, Monaghan, Louth and Cavan, four of the six Irish counties within the Northern Ireland-Ireland border region remain important points of origin for cross-border labour mobility into Northern Ireland (South to North), with significant numbers of workers undertaking this type of mobility.
- In the five Northern Ireland local government districts which abut the border, 11,800 workers were part of the furlough payment scheme as of 30 September 2021, while 14,400 self-employed workers had submitted claims to the SEISS scheme by 7 October 2021, a total of 47% of all claimants in Northern Ireland. In the border counties in the Republic of Ireland, 43,408 were in receipt of either PUP or EWSS by 29 August 2021, or 10% of all Covid supports. Payments to those in the Northern Ireland-Ireland border region accounted for 14% of all payments on the island of Ireland in the period late August to early October.
- The seasonally adjusted Claimant Count for Northern Ireland in October 2021 was 47,000 (4.8% of the workforce). This is 26% below the May 2020 peak, and 54% higher than the pre-pandemic count in March 2020.

³ Office of National Statistics, [Detailed information on the administrative structure within Northern Ireland.](#)

Introduction

The overarching purpose of this report is to provide up-to-date and tangible information on cross-border activity in the Northern Ireland-Ireland region that will assist the EURES Ireland/Northern Ireland Cross-Border Partnership in supporting jobseekers, workers, and employers in the region, and to facilitate the Partnership in identifying the areas where it can employ its resources most effectively.⁴ The core elements of this report bring together the updated relevant information from the respective statistical agencies, which is produced on a regular basis, in both jurisdictions on the island of Ireland to all those with an interest in cross-border mobility.

This is the third yearly report from the EURES Ireland/Northern Ireland Cross-Border Partnership following “Cross Border Labour Market Movement and Skills Gaps on the Island of Ireland”, which was produced in 2019, and “Labour Market Movement and Skills Gaps on the Island of Ireland”, produced in 2020. This report will broadly follow the same structure and aims of the previous reports, providing an updated picture of cross-border activity, and where possible given the availability of up-to-date information, try to provide material on the impact of Covid-19 within the border regions and its effects on cross-border workers and employers.

There have also been previous analyses from a cross-border or all-island perspective. Indeed, this report relies on previous analyses in certain areas to provide background and context, such as using the information provided by the censuses carried out in the respective jurisdictions in 2011, from which Ireland’s Central Statistics Office (CSO) and the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA) jointly produced a report in 2014 that “for the first time [...] draws together results from both censuses and explores both similarities and differences in the two populations as well as looking at how these populations have changed over time”.⁵

More recently, the Department for the Economy in Northern Ireland produced “Background Evidence on the Movement of People across the Northern Ireland-Ireland Border”.⁶ This report, produced in March 2018, had an intentional cross-border approach to its gathering and analysis of data, which not only included information on cross-border commuters, but went much further to look at subjects such as border communities and cross-border cooperation. In this case, however, the publication of what is a very valuable report was prompted by a “unique” circumstance: the United Kingdom’s decision to leave the European Union.

As well as its regular and ongoing provision of relevant information to its clients and stakeholders, the EURES Ireland/Northern Ireland Cross-Border Partnership had also commissioned a report in 2010 to address the need for a more accurate assessment of the

⁴ This report has been authored by Ben Rosher and Anthony Soares, Centre for Cross Border Studies.

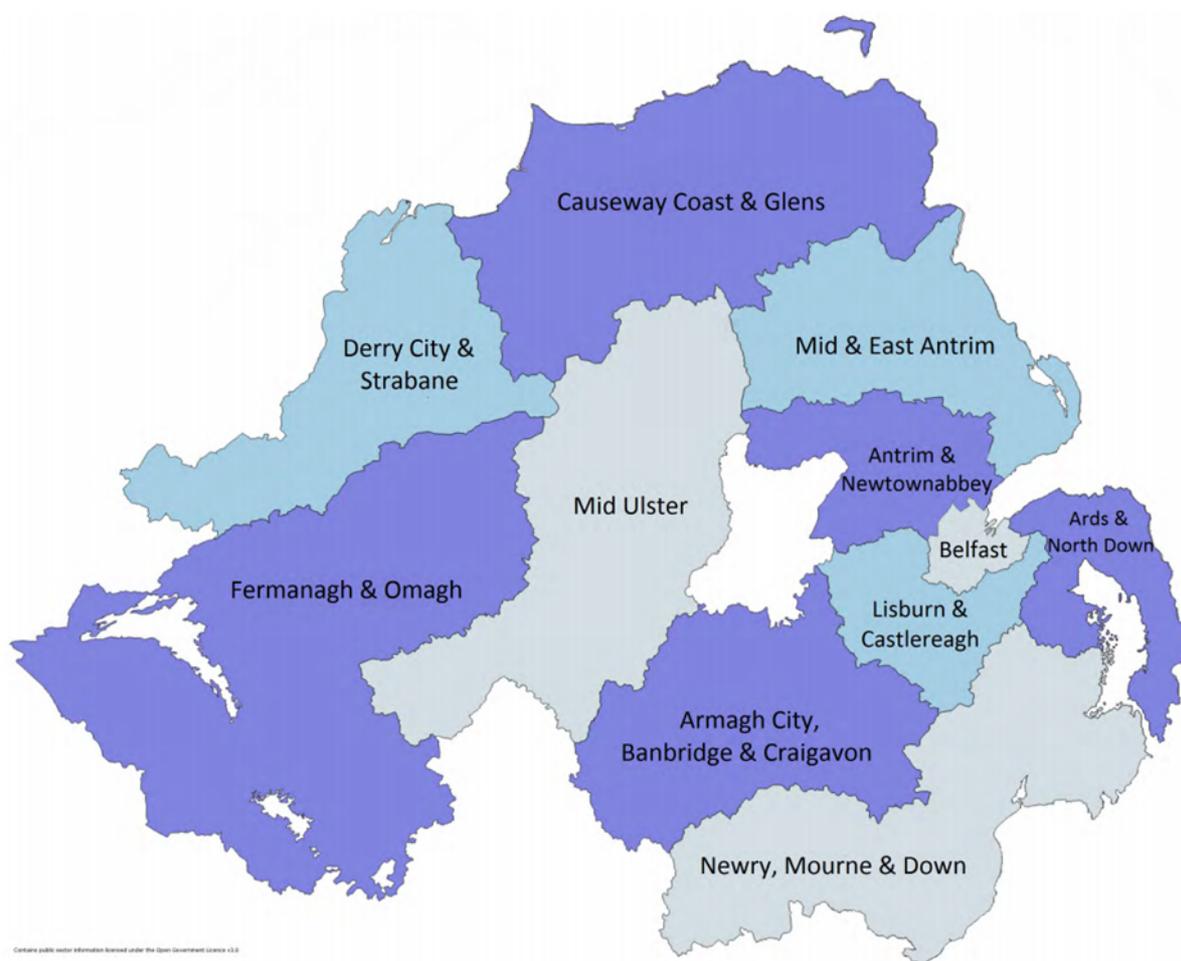
⁵ CSO and NISRA, [“Census 2011: Ireland and Northern Ireland”](#) (June 2014), p.5.

⁶ Department for the Economy [“Background Evidence on the Movement of People across the Northern Ireland – Ireland Border”](#) (March 2018)

nature of cross-border mobility.⁷ However, that report's primary purpose was "to provide statistics on the number of people within the North West region who commute across the Northern Ireland/ Republic of Ireland border to work", and therefore was limited in its geographical scope.

Much like the previous reports in this series, this report aims to address cross-border mobility within a wider geographical space that includes all of Northern Ireland and the border counties of Ireland. In terms of the areas of analysis in Northern Ireland, this includes the five local government districts adjoining the Northern Ireland-Ireland border: Armagh City, Banbridge & Craigavon Borough Council; Derry City & Strabane District Council; Fermanagh & Omagh District Council; Mid Ulster District Council; and Newry, Mourne and Down District Council (shown below in Map 1).⁸

Map 1: Northern Ireland Councils



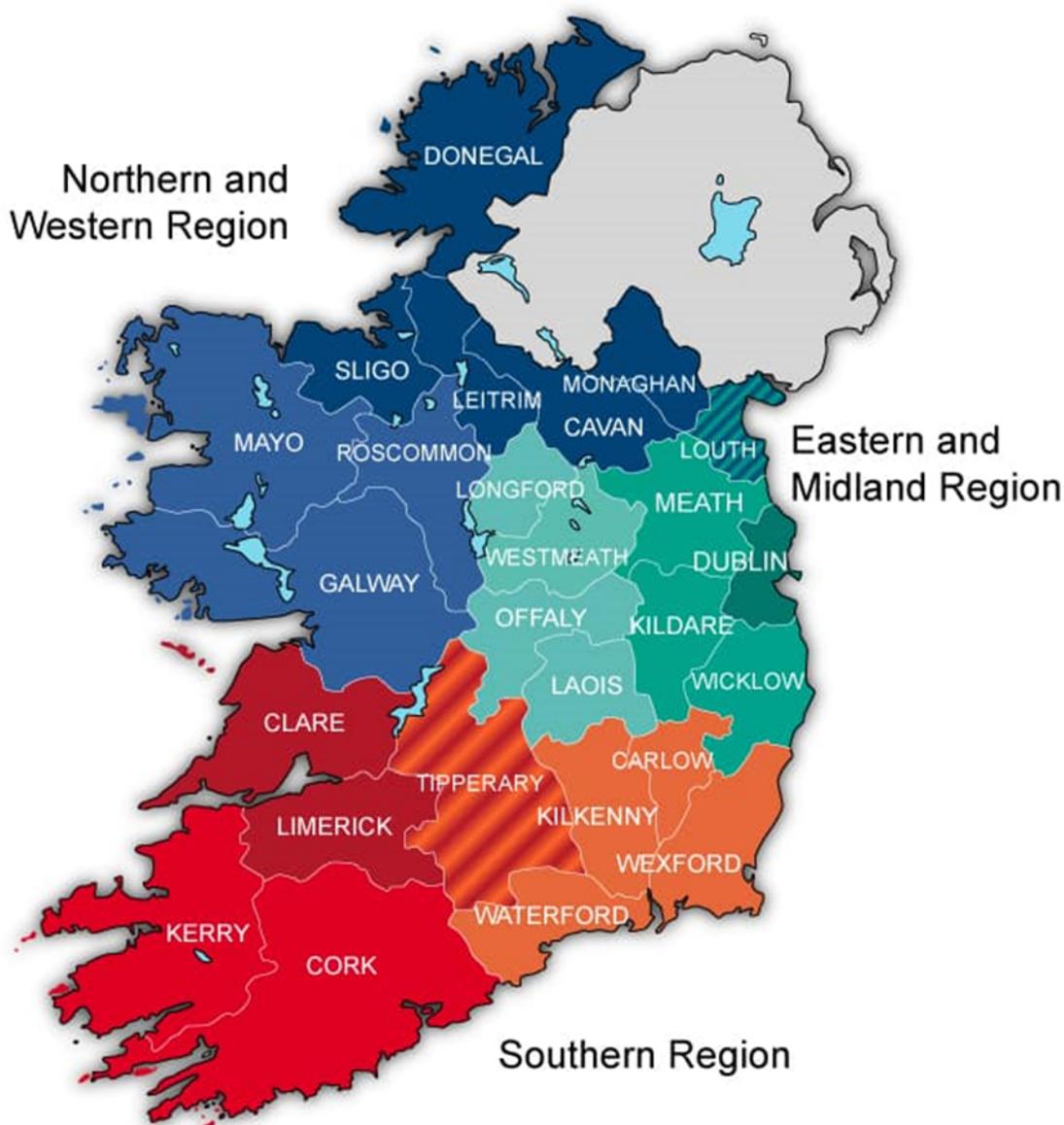
In relation to the Republic of Ireland, the main areas of interest for this report are those counties located within the border region, specifically: Cavan, Donegal, Leitrim, Louth,

⁷ Joe Shiels and Annmarie O’Kane, Centre for Cross Border Studies, [“Measuring Mobility in a Changing Island: A report commissioned by the EURES Cross Border Partnership”](#) (May 2010), p.5.

⁸ Department for Communities, [Map of Northern Ireland Councils](#)

Monaghan and Sligo. It should be noted that these counties fall under two Irish administrative NUTS 3 areas. Five of the counties make up the NUTS 3 Border region: Cavan, Donegal, Leitrim, Monaghan and Sligo; while Louth is located within the NUTS 3 Mid-East region along with the non-border counties of Kildare, Meath and Wicklow. The NUTS 3 regions are in turn part of three Regional Assemblies (shown in below in Map 2), which are NUTS 2 areas:⁹ Northern & Western (of which the border region is a part), Southern, and Eastern & Midland (of which the Mid-East region is a part).¹⁰

Map 2: Regional Assemblies (Nuts 2) in Ireland

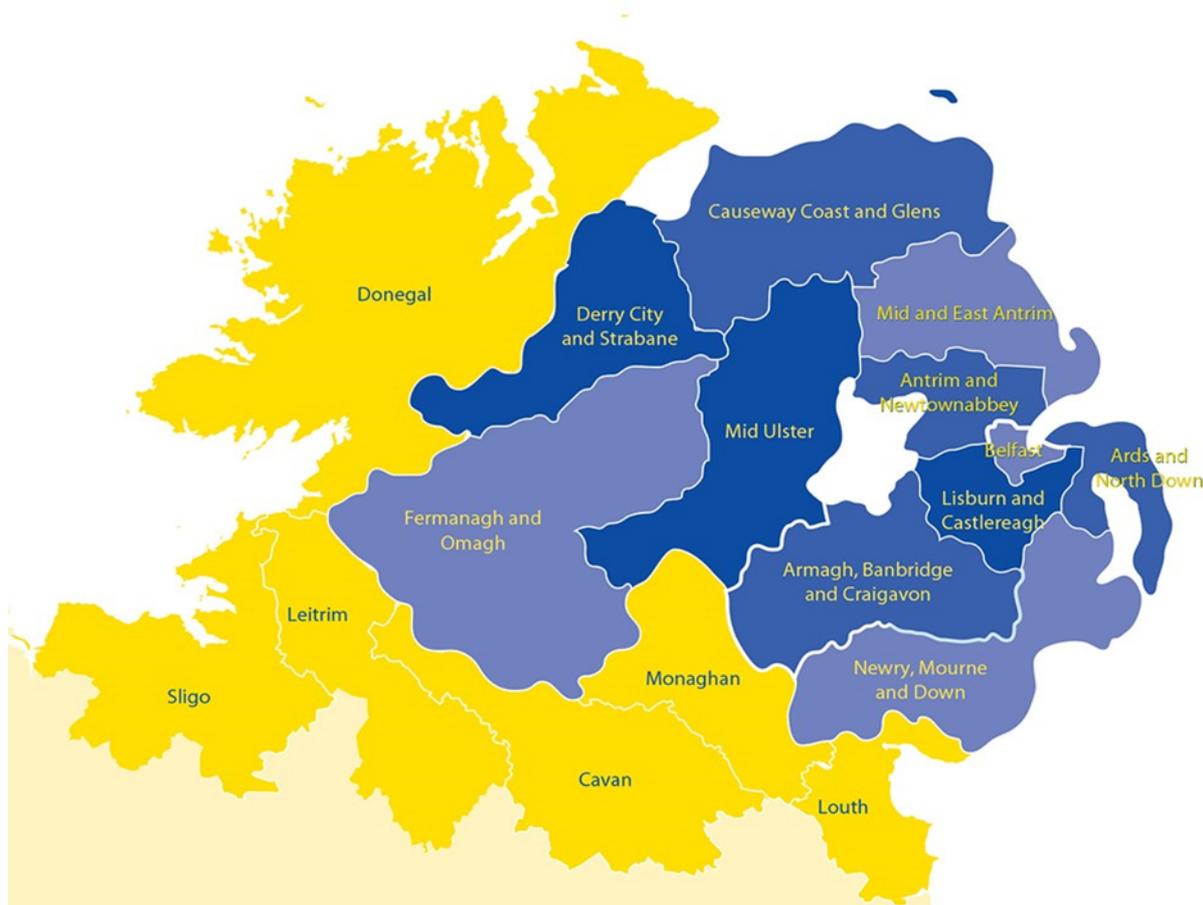


⁹ Institute of Public Administration, [“Local and Regional Bodies in Ireland 2012-2016”](#) (December 2016), p.7.

¹⁰ CSO, [Information Note for Data Users: revision to the Irish NUTS 2 and NUTS 3 Regions](#).

So, while this report will also provide statistics at a national and regional level, these will be to provide context for the border region. The particular area of focus will be on the NUTS 3 regions, local government districts, and counties relating to the Northern Ireland-Ireland border region. These can be seen in Map 3 below.¹¹

Map 3: NI Councils & ROI Counties



What follows in this report then, is an overview of the context in which cross-border mobility takes place on the island of Ireland, beginning with key population statistics for the Northern Ireland-Ireland border region and how these fit within their respective jurisdictional landscapes, as well as within the wider canvas provided by the European Union. We then offer a picture of economic activity within the region, before addressing the status of mobility across the border and highlighting the impacts of Covid-19 and some of the key findings from a survey of businesses undertaken by the EURES Cross-Border Partnership. But before doing so, it is important to address a major (and ongoing) challenge to a statistical analysis from a cross-border perspective.

¹¹ SEUPB, [“PEACE IV Programme Overview”](#).

Counting cross-border workers: the statistical challenge

As has been highlighted in previous studies of cross-border mobility, a degree of caution is necessary when engaging in discussion and analysis of those who regularly cross the Northern Ireland-Ireland border to work. The 2010 report “Measuring Mobility in a Changing Island”, commissioned by the EURES Ireland/Northern Ireland Cross-Border Partnership, alerted readers to the fact that “There are no centralised or categorised statistics recorded on the extent of cross-border mobility at all-island or regional level”.¹² More recently, Northern Ireland’s Department for the Economy’s March 2018 report noted: “There is no one complete and definitive data source that records the number and purpose of all cross border movements between Northern Ireland, Great Britain and ROI [the Republic of Ireland]”.¹³

This issue is not particular to the Northern Ireland-Ireland border. In looking at the provision of information services for cross-border workers at a European level, the Association of European Border Regions (AEBR) states: “There is a lack of reliable data. Therefore, it is difficult to say how many workers cross a European border several times per week in order to get from their homes to their workplaces”.¹⁴

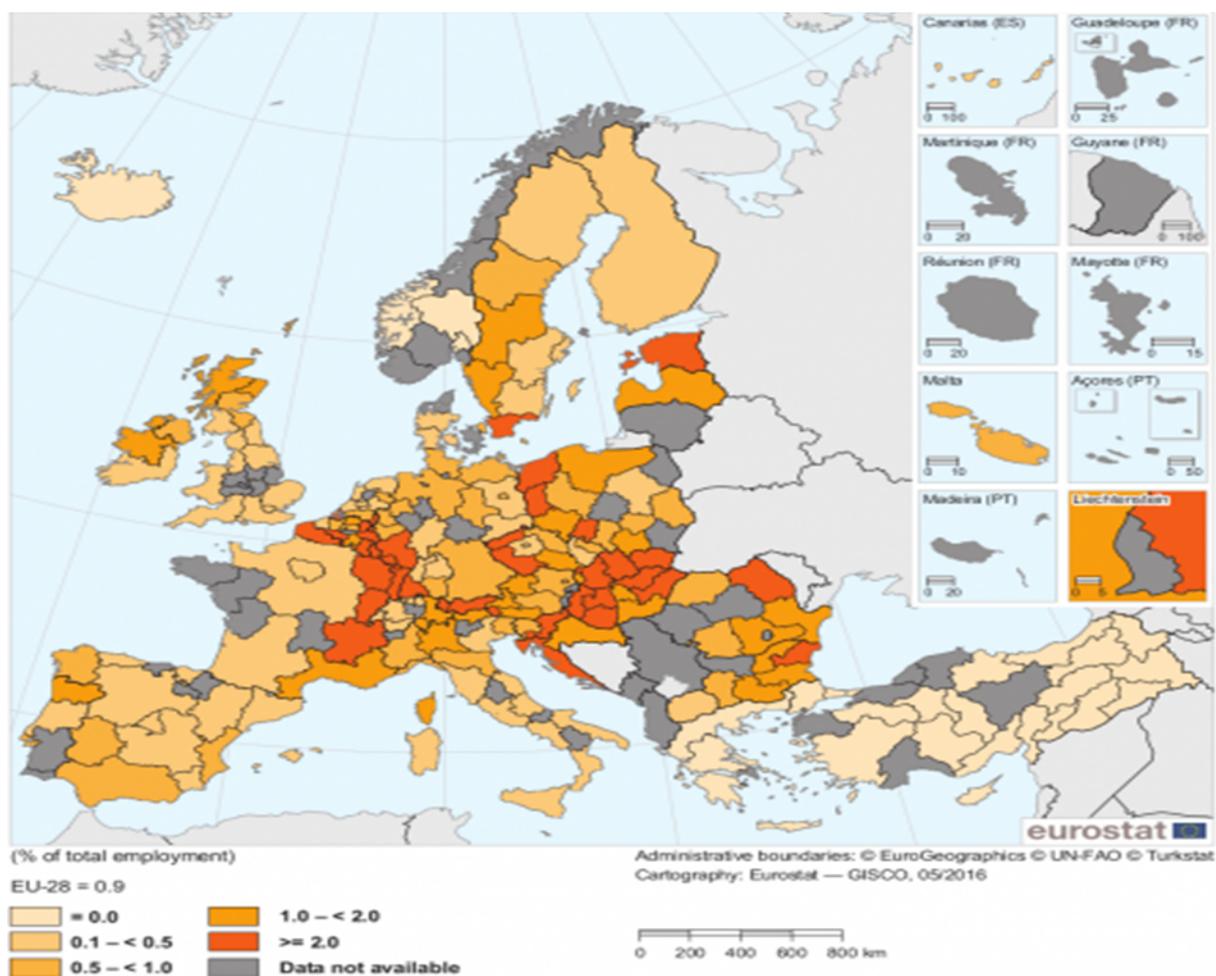
It is important to recall, therefore, that this report uses the most recent data available in each jurisdiction. However, at times this can mean that the data from each jurisdiction may relate to time periods that do not correspond neatly with each other. Nevertheless, we have chosen to use the most recent data and clarify any temporal disparities, rather than use earlier data in order to make comparisons that would have been more chronologically attuned but lacking in informative value.

¹² Joe Shiels and Annmarie O’Kane, Centre for Cross Border Studies, [“Measuring Mobility in a Changing Island: A report commissioned by the EURES Cross Border Partnership”](#) (May 2010), p.5.

¹³ Department for the Economy [“Background Evidence on the Movement of People across the Northern Ireland – Ireland Border”](#) (March 2018), p.4.

¹⁴ AEBR, [“Information services for cross-border workers in European border regions”](#) (October 2012) p.1.

Map 4: Share of total employment commuting across national borders by Nuts 2 regions (2015) % of total employment.



Nevertheless, a report for the European Commission put the figure of cross-border workers in the EU in 2019 as comprising 1.5 million,¹⁵ and this is simply an example of an analysis at EU-level of statistics related to cross-border mobility.

Map 4 above displays statistics on the share of total employment commuting across borders by NUTS 2 regions from the 2016 edition of Eurostat’s regional yearbook.¹⁶ This information, while useful in setting a broader context, does not allow us to gain any insight into cross-border mobility on the areas in the Northern Ireland-Ireland border area with which this report is concerned.

This reinforces the need for caution when making definitive statements regarding the numbers of citizens involved in cross-border mobility in this geographical space. The Northern

¹⁵ European Commission, “[Annual Report on Intra-EU Labour Mobility 2020 “2020 annual report on intra-EU labour mobility”](#)” (December 2020), p.14: “In 2019 there were 1.5 million cross-border workers within the EU-28 (a decrease of 0.6% in comparison to 2018) and 1.9 million cross-border workers within the EU-28 and EFTA countries (an increase of 0.9% in comparison to 2018),” p.14.; “The number of cross-border workers in EU and EFTA countries increased by 0.9% between 2018 and 2019 and reached 1.89 million. Looking only at cross-border mobility between EU-28 countries, that number was at 1.5 million and decreased by 0.6%, or ca. 9 000 persons, on 2018. The decrease was slightly larger in the EU-27, with 10 900 or 0.8% fewer than in 2018”, p.70.

¹⁶ Eurostat, “[Share of total employment commuting across national borders, by NUTS 2 regions, 2015](#)”.

Ireland Department for the Economy's March 2018 report underlines why this is the case, referring to the existence of different estimates as to how many people commute across the Northern Ireland-Ireland border, and putting forward an estimate of its own:

"The exact number of people that cross the border to work or study is difficult to quantify. The Centre for Cross Border Studies has used a variety of studies to provide an estimate that there are between 23,000 and 29,000 people who commute across the border. Based on the available information, an estimate of 25,000 trips (including daily and less regular commuters) across the border every day for work or study appears reasonable".¹⁷

Further on in its report, the Department for the Economy notes how the Centre for Cross Border Studies' "figures are higher than the statistics reported in the 2011 Censuses for NI and ROI [which] report that a total of 14,800 persons regularly commuted between Northern Ireland and ROI to their main place of work or study". It goes on to offer possible reasons as to the different estimates:

"However due to how the question in the Census is asked, these figures will exclude self-employed people e.g., freight drivers, builders who work on both sides of the border or do not have a fixed place of work for example. They will also exclude people who work/study mainly from home but are occasional cross-border travellers (such as those working in sales or construction). Therefore, the difference in the estimates produced in the Censuses and the estimate from the Centre for Cross Border Study research can be explained by the different methodologies and questions asked".¹⁸

Beyond the numbers of those involved in cross-border mobility on the island of Ireland, there are also difficulties in making direct statistical comparisons between Ireland and Northern Ireland. As previously highlighted, this is often due to differences in how and when data is collected on the two sides of the border, which although usually minor in nature nevertheless mean a degree of caution is always necessary. Despite these difficulties, we can reach a good degree of understanding of the nature of cross-border mobility across the Northern Ireland-Ireland border, and how the populations living in the cross-border region fare in comparison to the wider population in either jurisdiction.

¹⁷ Department for the Economy "[Background Evidence on the Movement of People across the Northern Ireland – Ireland Border](#)" (March 2018), p.18.

¹⁸ Ibid, p.18.

The Context for cross-border mobility on the island of Ireland

The following section will briefly set out the context in which cross-border mobility has, until recently, taken place on the island of Ireland, highlighting the drivers encouraging such mobility, and any obstacles that may hinder it. Mapping the context, drivers, and impediments to cross-border mobility has proved remarkably challenging this year; this is the first year following the end of the Brexit transition period which has brought an end to Freedom of Movement (FoM) that had previously underpinned the right of EU (particularly EEA) nationals to live, work and avail of healthcare and education on both sides of the Irish border. In order to contextualise the changes to cross-border mobility that are resulting from Brexit, this section will begin by highlighting the framework for mobility across borders provided by the European Union, which is one that was shared by both Ireland and the United Kingdom until the 31st December 2020. The framework offered a number of safeguards to those enacting their right to freedom of movement across the Northern Ireland-Ireland border. From that EU landscape we will also draw on some of the most common obstacles to cross-border mobility, and note some of the instruments employed to address them. Having noted the principal contours of cross-border mobility within the wider EU context, we will then consider the extent to which these are replicated in the Northern Ireland-Ireland context, and note any specific drivers to this mobility on the island of Ireland before outlining new UK policies that may impact on mobility across the Irish border and how they have been implemented in the first year following the end of the transition period.

The EU context for cross-border mobility

The right of free movement of EU citizens across internal borders is enshrined in the core treaties of the European Union. While the free movement of workers is guaranteed to EU citizens in Article 45 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU),¹⁹ Article 8(a) of the Maastricht Treaty would expand the principle of the right to move and reside freely within the EU to all its citizens and their family members.²⁰ Allied, and in some senses underpinning these overarching rights of free movement, is the principle of non-discrimination based on nationality set out in Article 18 of the TFEU,²¹ as well as Article 21(2) of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union.²² Having exercised their right to move within the EU, its citizens are therefore protected from being treated in a discriminatory manner by any host Member State based on nationality.

¹⁹ Article 45(1) of the [Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union](#) states “Freedom of movement for workers shall be guaranteed within the Union”, while Article 45(2) declares: “Such freedom of movement shall entail the abolition of any discrimination based on nationality between workers of the Member States as regards employment, remuneration and other conditions of work and employment”.

²⁰ The [Maastricht Treaty](#) meant the TFEU would now reflect the wider right of freedom of movement in Article 8(a), which states: “Every citizen of the Union shall have the right to move and reside freely within the territory of the Member States, subject to the limitations and conditions laid down in the Treaties and by the measures adopted to give them effect”.

²¹ Article 18 of the [TFEU](#) declares: “Within the scope of application of the Treaties, and without prejudice to any special provisions contained therein, any discrimination on grounds of nationality shall be prohibited”.

²² Article 21(1) of the [Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union](#) states: “Any discrimination based on any ground such as sex, race, colour, ethnic or social origin, genetic features, language, religion or belief, political or any other opinion, membership of a national minority, property, birth, disability, age or sexual orientation shall be prohibited”.

To ensure the practical effect across its Member States of the rights enshrined in the EU Treaties, various items of secondary legislation have sought to consolidate the free movement of persons as a cornerstone of the Union's Internal Market.

Thus, for example, Regulation 883/2004 set out rules on the coordination of social security systems between Member States in order to – among other things – ensure that movement for the purposes of employment does not affect the payment of social security due to citizens as they move between Member States.²³ Directive 2004/38/EC, meanwhile, underlined that the right of free movement of EU citizens “be also granted to their family members, irrespective of nationality”.²⁴ Alongside such regulations on free movement, the EU has also developed a range of measures to create an environment conducive to citizen mobility. These include the European Health Insurance Card,²⁵ the directive safeguarding patients' rights in cross-border healthcare,²⁶ and the recognition of professional qualifications.²⁷

In terms of the mobility of cross-border workers specifically, the number of cross-border workers in EU and EFTA countries “increased by 0.9% between 2018 and 2019 and reached 1.89 million. Looking only at cross-border mobility between EU-28 countries, that number was at 1.5 million and decreased by 0.6%, or ca. 9 000 persons, on 2018. The decrease was slightly larger in the EU-27, with 10 900 or 0.8% fewer than in 2018”.²⁸

The 2019 report on “Employment barriers in border regions” undertaken for the European Parliament sets out the principal factors influencing the scale of cross-border mobility across the EU as stemming from socio-economic differentials, and labour market conditions:

“Cross-border commuting therefore appears to follow an asymmetrical pattern given that the greater the difference in average earnings or in the availability of jobs between two regions, the more likely it is that the region with better labour market conditions will draw in more cross-border commuters. Ultimately an attractive labour market on the other side of the border has a stronger “pull-effect” than “push-factors” experienced in a country of residence such as low employment rates or recession; in sum it is the prospect of something better that makes people choose to work across the border rather than poor conditions in their own country that “push” them away” (emphasis in the original).²⁹

²³ [REGULATION \(EC\) No 883/2004 OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL of 29 April 2004 on the coordination of social security systems.](#)

²⁴ [DIRECTIVE 2004/38/EC OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL of 29 April 2004 on the right of citizens of the Union and their family members to move and reside freely within the territory of the Member States amending Regulation \(EEC\) No 1612/68 and repealing Directives 64/221/EEC, 68/360/EEC, 72/194/EEC, 73/148/EEC, 75/34/EEC, 75/35/EEC, 90/364/EEC, 90/365/EEC and 93/96/EEC.](#)

²⁵ [The European Health Insurance Card](#)

²⁶ [DIRECTIVE 2011/24/EU OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL of 9 March 2011 on the application of patients' rights in cross-border healthcare.](#)

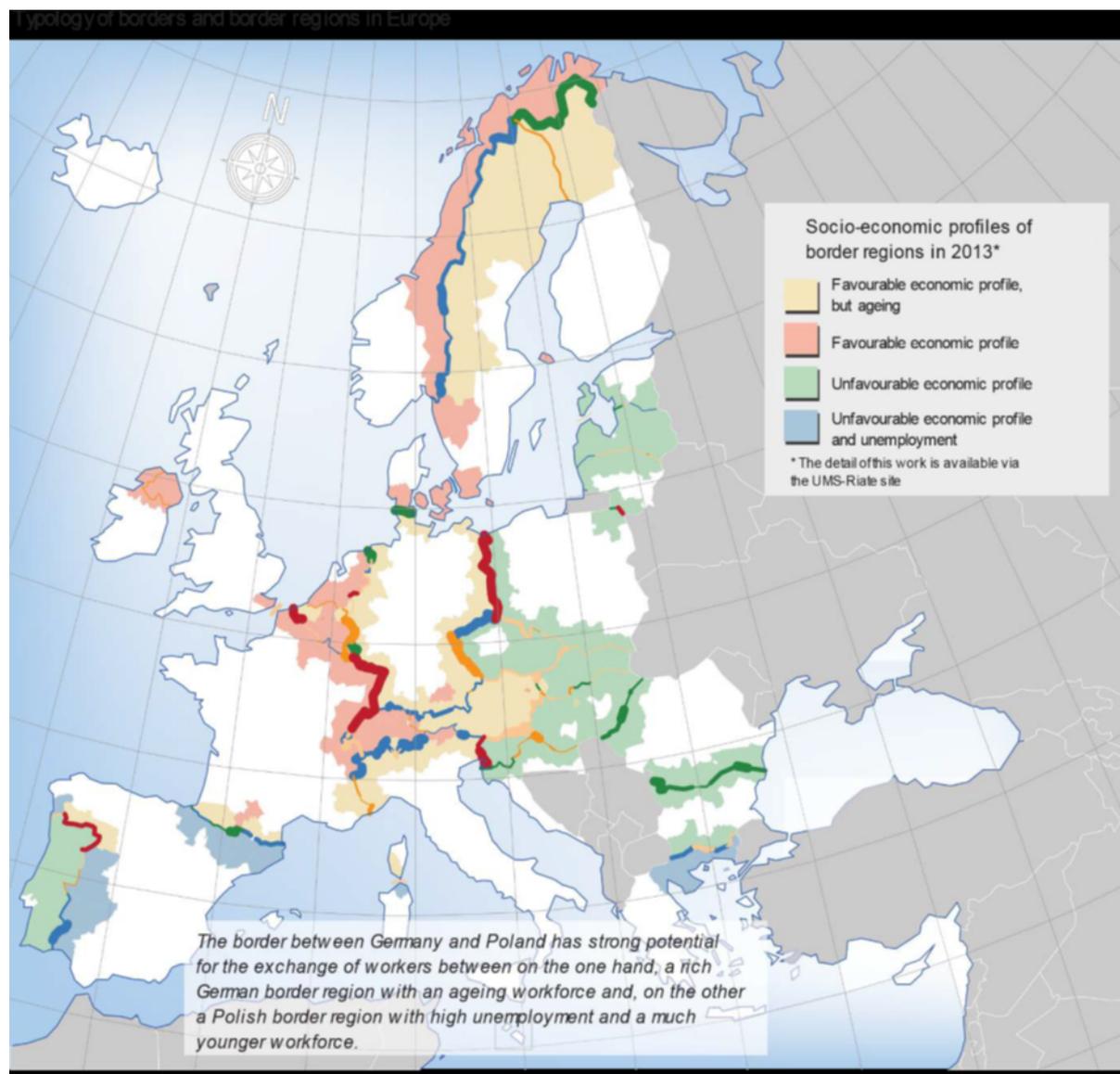
²⁷ [DIRECTIVE 2005/36/EC OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL of 7 September 2005 on the recognition of professional qualifications.](#)

²⁸ [Annual Report on Intra-EU Labour Mobility](#) (2020), p.70.

²⁹ [“Employment barriers in border regions”](#), p.14.

The European Parliament's report also draws on work undertaken by the French Commissariat Général à l'Égalité des Territoires (CGET), which developed a typology of border regions as a way to assess how likely cross-border movement is across various borders. This allowed for a mapping of the conditions for cross-border commuting across the EU, where the Northern Ireland-Ireland border region is seen as having a favourable economic profile for such mobility.³⁰

Map 5: Typology of borders and border regions in Europe



However, cross-border mobility can be hampered by a range of obstacles with varying incidence across the EU. In 2012 the Association of European Border Regions (AEBR) highlighted the following as issues relating to cross-border labour mobility:³¹

³⁰ [ibid](#), p.13. The map included in the study for the European Parliament is a simplified version, and translated from French by its authors, of a map included in the Observatoire des Territoires' 2017 report "[Regards sur les Territoires](#)". See also RiATE's "[Typologie Socio-Économique des Régions Frontalières de l'Union Européenne \(2000-2012\)](#)" (February 2016).

³¹ AEBR, "[Information services for cross-border workers in European border regions](#)", pp.11-14.

- Differences in social security and tax systems
- Diverging application of EU regulations by agencies across Member States
- Lack of relevant statistical data
- Insufficient command of the language of the neighbouring country
- Prejudices and insecurities about the working conditions in a neighbouring country, and fear of discrimination
- Mutual recognition of qualifications
- Lack of sufficient information and transparency on the principles governing the labour market.
- Differing currencies and fluctuations in their values can be an important factor in cross-border mobility particularly for those working in the opposite jurisdiction (this is particularly acute in Northern Ireland).

More recently, a large-scale study by the European Commission looked at the legal and administrative obstacles at 37 out of 40 of the EU's internal land borders. It compiled 239 cases of legal and administrative obstacles, representing an inventory that is "an empirical, partial and time-dependent 'snapshot' of a specific situation prevailing in the period 2011-2015".³² In this study the policy areas relating to cross-border mobility most affected by legal and administrative obstacles were:

- Labour Market & Education: "Mobility of cross-border workers", "Mobility of trainees, students and teachers" and "Recognition of diploma or professional qualification certificates".
- Social Security & Health: "Access to social insurance system" and "Access to health care services and medical treatment".
- Transport & Mobility: "Public transport by bus, rail, light rail or metro" and "Scope and quality of regional/local and cross-border transport infrastructures and of related maintenance services".
- Industry & Trade: "Exporting of goods and cross-border provision of commercial services, including e-commerce".
- Policy Planning & Public Services: "Emergency and rescue services".
- Environment: "Protection and management of natural resources".³³

The origins of a majority of the obstacles identified lie within Member States themselves, where national or regional legislation hinders cross-border mobility, with other obstacles arising from an unwillingness at administrative level to address problems in a cross-border

³² European Commission, "[Easing legal and administrative obstacles in EU border regions: Final Report](#)", p.5.

³³ "[Easing legal and administrative obstacles in EU border regions: Final Report](#)", p.19.

context. Therefore, the European Commission study concludes that “a removal or alleviation of the majority of registered border obstacles primarily requires action within and between Member States” (p.34).

Nevertheless, as well as providing legislative measures to overcome many of these obstacles, the European Union has developed a number of supportive instruments, including the proposed European Cross-Border Mechanism.³⁴ The European Commission’s formal proposal for regulation to introduce such a mechanism, which would be employed by interested Member States on a voluntary basis, sets out how it would help in addressing cross-border obstacles, by making available:

“a mechanism to apply, for a common cross-border region, in a given Member State, the legal provisions from the neighbouring Member State if applying its own laws would present a legal obstacle to implementing a joint project (which might be an item of infrastructure or any service of general economic interest)”.³⁵

Of course, among many other supports provided by the European Union to address legal and administrative obstacles in border regions, and in particular those affecting labour mobility, is the EURES Network. The study for the European Parliament on employment barriers in border regions identifies, for example, how “Cross-border partnerships are also a key aspect of EURES wherein networks are established to help workers overcome barriers to working across borders”.³⁶ This is one of the core reasons why the EURES Ireland/Northern Ireland Cross-Border Partnership was created, and why it has commissioned the present study.

[The context for cross-border mobility on the island of Ireland](#)

Until this year, underpinning much of the context for cross-border mobility on the island of Ireland were the frameworks, legislation, funding programmes and relevant instruments derived from Ireland and the UK’s common membership of the European Union. However, the UK has now departed from the EU and the post-Brexit transition period came to an end on the 31st December 2020, which means that cross-border mobility on the island of Ireland now takes place under new frameworks. The Withdrawal Agreement and the Northern Ireland Protocol have sought to ensure that much of the conditions for cross-border mobility on the island of Ireland will continue to exist. Further, the UK and Irish governments’ commitment to preserve the Common Travel Area (CTA), and associated rights have mitigated many potential issues for British and Irish nationals who cross the border regularly, with the UK government confirming that “You will never go through immigration control at the land border between Ireland and Northern Ireland”.³⁷ However, the EU Settled Status³⁸ and Frontier Worker Permit³⁹ schemes implemented by the UK following Brexit have and will

³⁴ For an overview of this see the European Commission’s [“European Cross-Border Mechanism: a practical explanation”](#).

³⁵ [Proposal for a REGULATION OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL on a mechanism to resolve legal and administrative obstacles in a cross-border context](#), p.6.

³⁶ [“Employment barriers in border regions”](#), pp.26-27.

³⁷ UK Government guidance on Travelling between the UK and Ireland, Isle of Man, Guernsey or Jersey states (updated October 2021)

³⁸ [EU Settlement Scheme: EU, other EEA and Swiss citizens and their family members](#) (2021)

³⁹ [Frontier worker permit scheme guidance](#) (2021)

continue to result in increased checks on EEA nationals (residing in both Ireland and Northern Ireland) when attempting to access various services in Northern Ireland such as employment, housing, education, and healthcare. To illustrate this, by September 2021 102,260 applications to the EU Settled Status scheme were made in Northern Ireland.⁴⁰ With regard to the Frontier Worker Permit Scheme, while not all of these applications will have been made with the aim of working in Northern Ireland, between Q4 of 2020 when the scheme was launched, and Q3 of 2021 (the most recent data available), 13,598 applications to the Frontier Worker Permit scheme had been made, of which 9,795 had been issued.⁴¹

The UK-EU and UK-Irish efforts to preserve the conditions that the 1998 Belfast/Good Friday Agreement helped to create have meant that the unique impetus for cooperation and mobility between the two jurisdictions on the island of Ireland as part of what is an ongoing peace and reconciliation process can continue.

Strand 2 of the 1998 Agreement established the North South Ministerial Council “to bring together those with executive responsibilities in Northern Ireland and the Irish Government, to develop consultation, co-operation and action within the island of Ireland – including through implementation on an all-island and cross-border basis – on matters of mutual interest within the competence of the Administrations, North and South”.⁴² It also led to the establishment of six implementation bodies, including InterTradeIreland, which supports the development of cross-border trade, and the Special EU Programmes Body, which is the managing authority for the INTERREG and PEACE programmes, and will manage the successor programme, PEACE PLUS.

As well as setting the overall policy direction for the implementation bodies, the North South Ministerial Council (NSMC) is the forum for the two administrations on the island of Ireland to agree common policies and approaches in six areas of cooperation, which are implemented separately in each jurisdiction. These six areas, Agriculture, Education, Environment, Health, Tourism and Transport, can be said to impact on the context for cross-border mobility. For example, in these areas the NSMC has driven work on the recognition of qualifications, encouraged cooperation on cancer research, and approached transport policy within an all-island dimension.

However, while the Northern Ireland-Ireland border region may have a number of obstacles to cross-border mobility in common with other border regions in the EU, it also has others that are specifically related to the legacy of the conflict. This was reflected in the Cooperation Programme for PEACE IV – a European Territorial Cooperation programme that is in itself unique to the island of Ireland – which set out the background to the region in which projects to be supported by this EU funding stream would be operating in the 2014-2020 programming period:

“The history of the region and the relationship between the two parts of the island has resulted in the border becoming a barrier to economic and social development.

⁴⁰ Gov.uk, [EU Settlement Scheme quarterly statistics](#), (September 2021).

⁴¹ Gov.uk, [Work-related visas granted, by visa type](#).

⁴² <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-belfast-agreement>.

[...] The effects of the troubles/conflict on the Border Region of Ireland have been pronounced; the border towns in particular saw widespread division and disturbance which has continued to leave their mark”.⁴³

Following Brexit both the UK and EU have reaffirmed their commitment to the PEACE and INTERREG programmes which, under the funding framework agreed from 2021-2027, will be combined under the PEACE PLUS programme:

“PEACE PLUS is a new cross border programme that will contribute to a more prosperous and stable society in Northern Ireland and the Border Region of Ireland. The programme will achieve this by funding peace building activities and by funding activities that contribute to the cross border economic and territorial development of the region. The combination of the PEACE INTERREG type activities in a single programme and will include not only Peace building activity but also wider North/South economic, social and environmental activities of mutual interest, which are normally associated with an INTERREG programme”.⁴⁴

Covid-19 and Cross Border Mobility

Unlike national borders between some EU member states, there has not been a wholesale closure of the Northern Ireland-Ireland border in the wake of the Coronavirus pandemic. However, flows of cross-border labour mobility on the island of Ireland have been most immediately affected by the relative impact of the introduction of public health measures by each jurisdiction on economic activity. Nevertheless, at periods where public health restrictions were most stringent, the mobility of cross-border workers could continue, in the first instance, if their place of work was considered to be delivering an essential service by the jurisdiction in which it was located or, more latterly, whether it was included in the sectors of economic activity allowed to reopen as public health measures were eased.

The impact can also be felt differently according to the particular concentration of an activity within part of the cross-border territory, such as health and education in the North West of the island of Ireland. A survey of four Chambers of Commerce located in the Northern Ireland-Ireland border region, undertaken in 2020 by the Centre for Cross Border Studies into the impact of Covid-19 in the border region, highlighted how the respondents considered that the crisis had had an adverse impact on cross-border businesses due to their reliance on cross-border trade and supply chains. The virus has also impacted on those businesses located in the border region that whilst not involved in cross-border supply chains, had nevertheless suffered a drop in trade as clients from the opposite jurisdiction refrained from travel.⁴⁵

Citizens’ ability, therefore, to continue to cross the border for purposes of work has been dependent on the extent to which their area of activity has been affected by public health

⁴³ SEUPB, [PEACE IV Cooperation Programme](#), p.7.

⁴⁴ [European Territorial Co-operation 2021-2027: Preparing the EU PEACE PLUS Programme for the 2021 – 2027 period](#), p.3.; [UK announces majority contribution to PEACE PLUS funding](#).

⁴⁵ Centre for Cross Border Studies, [“The Impact of the Corona crisis on the Northern Ireland-Ireland cross-border territory and the cross-border alignment of responses”](#) (20 November 2020).

measures introduced in the relevant jurisdiction, and not by the introduction of any controls at the border. Moreover, neither government has introduced any requirement for cross-border workers to carry specific documentation to prove that their place of work is delivering an approved service. However, during early 2021 there were reports of the authorities turning back motorists travelling from Northern Ireland into Ireland if they were not travelling for essential purposes. These restrictions were not specifically at the border but because inter-county travel was prohibited in the Republic of Ireland at the time.⁴⁶

The UK and Irish governments reacted to the pandemic by putting in place supports for businesses and workers including the different supports available to cross-border workers. The UK Government announced the creation of the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS), and equivalent schemes – the Covid-19 Temporary Wage Subsidy Scheme (TWSS) and the Pandemic Unemployment Payment (PUP) announced by the Irish Government. Both the CJRS and TWSS allowed businesses to obtain support for furloughed cross-border workers. Cross-border workers resident in the Republic of Ireland were able to avail of the PUP scheme.

In more recent work undertaken by the Centre for Cross Border Studies in relation to the impacts of measures introduced as a result of the pandemic, cross-border workers resident in the Republic of Ireland have raised the issue of taxation. This has arisen as remote working became more prominent as a practice to reduce the risks of spreading Covid-19, meaning that cross-border workers resident in the Republic of Ireland, but working remotely for employers located in Northern Ireland, found themselves potentially liable for the payment of taxes in the Republic of Ireland. In light of the circumstances caused by the pandemic, the tax authorities in the Republic of Ireland (the Revenue), have waived the personal tax liabilities arising from the need of cross-border workers to work remotely from their homes in the Republic of Ireland.

In 2020 the Centre for Cross Border Studies reported a decrease in cross-border traffic, with 3,882,291 less journeys recorded in the first 6 months of 2020 compared to the same period in 2019, as both jurisdictions on the island went into lockdown and workers across the island of Ireland were told to work from home where possible by the governments in the respective jurisdictions.⁴⁷ Comparing the figures for the same period in 2021 (1 January to 30 June) to those in 2020, there was a very small overall increase in cross-border traffic, with 231,136 more journeys made across the 12 traffic counters near the border used for the 2020 report, although the number of journeys recorded at four of the traffic counter sites actually fell.⁴⁸ There is no doubt that cross-border mobility on the island of Ireland has been affected by the Covid pandemic. However, the full extent of the impact of the virus in the Northern Ireland-

⁴⁶ [Motorists 'turned back' at Irish border](#) (2021).

⁴⁷ Centre for Cross Border Studies, [“The Impact of COVID-19 on Cross-Border Movement on the island of Ireland”](#), (August 2020), p.135. The data was taken from a total of 12 TTI traffic counters located in close proximity to the Northern Ireland/Ireland border.

⁴⁸ Total journeys recorded at the 12 TTI traffic counters in 2020 were 10,740,157, whereas in 2021 there were 10,971,293 journeys recorded. The four traffic counter sites where the number of journeys recorded fell in comparison to 2020 were: the N02, between the NI border and Emyvale, Mullinderg, Co. Monaghan; N15, Lifford to Castlefinn, Inchenagh, Co. Donegal; N03, between Belleek and Ballyshannon, Templenew, Co. Donegal; and N13, between Bridgend and Burnfoot, Co. Donegal.

Ireland border region may not be known for some time to come, particularly as one or both jurisdictions could again decide to reintroduce public health restrictions.

EURES

EURES is a cooperation network designed to facilitate the free movement of workers within the EU 27 countries plus Switzerland, Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway to look for and take up a job.

The network is composed of: the European Coordination Office (ECO), the National Coordination Offices (NCOs), EURES Partners and the Associate EURES Partners.

Partners in the network may include Public Employment Services (PES), Private employment services (PRES), trade unions, employers' organisations and other relevant actors in the labour market. The partners provide information, placement and recruitment services to employers and jobseekers whereas the European and National Coordination Offices oversee the organisation of the activities at European and national level respectively.

Moreover, EURES has an important role to play in providing specific information and facilitate placements for the benefit of employers and frontier workers in European cross-border regions.

The European Union's principle of free movement of workers is considered one of the most important rights of EU citizens. It means that you can move to any EU Member State, as well as Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway, Switzerland to look for and take up a job.

Yet, it may sometimes seem like a daunting and difficult task to make use of this right. The purpose of EURES is to help and support jobseekers and employers with that.

This involves the provision of a broad range of services, available on the EURES portal or through the vast human network of more than a thousand advisers working in the EURES Member and Partner organisations.

EURES services to jobseekers and employers include:

- Matching of job vacancies and CVs on the EURES portal
- Information and guidance and other support services for workers and employers
- Access to information on living and working conditions in the EU member states, such as taxation, pensions, health insurance and social security.
- Specific support services for frontier workers and employers in cross-border regions
- Support to specific groups in the context of EURES targeted job mobility schemes, such as Your first EURES job and Reactivate
- Promotion of youth opportunities via Drop'pin@EURES, the place where companies and organisations can promote and showcase their youth opportunities designed to help young Europeans take their first steps into the labour market.
- Support to dynamic recruitment events through the European (Online) Job Days platform

- Information on and access to post-recruitment assistance, such as language training and support with integration in the destination country

The EURES Ireland-Northern Ireland Cross-Border Partnership

The EURES Cross Border Partnership Ireland – Northern Ireland is an alliance consisting of representatives from the Employment Services Northern Ireland (Department for Communities, DfC) the Employment Services from the Republic of Ireland (Department of Social Protection, DSP), Trade Unions from both sides of the Border (Belfast Unemployed Resource Centre NI and UNITE the Union, Republic of Ireland), Chambers of Commerce (The Londonderry Chamber from NI and Dundalk Chamber from Republic of Ireland), The Confederation of British Industry (CBI in NI) and Irish Business and Employers' Confederation (IBEC in the Republic of Ireland).

The main objective of the EURES Cross Border Partnership Ireland – Northern Ireland is to offer employment services to existing and potential workers and employers in the cross border region, through promoting the benefits of cross border labour mobility and improving awareness of job opportunities (and career development) and by encouraging employers to see the potential of having access to a larger cross border labour market. The partnership has a mission statement which states;

'Our aim is to support frontier and cross border workers, jobseekers and employers in the Ireland/Northern Ireland Border region. We do this by raising and improving awareness of cross border living and working conditions, the cross border labour market and the benefits of mobility. We help employers, workers, jobseekers and job changers in this Border region to capitalise on the opportunities offered through their access to a cross border labour market in the border region of the Island of Ireland and the free recruitment and support service that the EURES Cross Border Partnership and the wider EURES European network can provide.'

The EURES Cross Border Partnership in Ireland – Northern Ireland has been in existence for over 20 years and is seen as a key contributor to the lives of the cross border worker, jobseeker and employer. It aims to address imbalances for our target groups through supporting employers in finding the skills sets required which can contribute towards the stability of the employment environment and through supporting jobseekers in cross border movement.

The Partnership provides clear factual information and advice on working and living conditions to those citizens in both jurisdictions in the cross border region and the information produced is highly regarded by end users and organisations alike.

The Partnership covers all of Northern Ireland and the border counties of Ireland (Louth, Cavan, Monaghan, Donegal, Sligo and Leitrim. The main target groups for the EURES Cross Border Partnership Ireland – N Ireland include:

- Frontier workers in the region
- Employers in the region experiencing skills shortages
- Jobseekers in the border counties

- SMEs in the region
- Unemployed Young People who are living in the Border region
- People who are long-term unemployed who are living in the Border region
- EU Migrants living or working in the Border region with language deficits
- Public Employment Service officers in the Region
- Women returners
- Community Groups.
- University Students and Graduates.

The work of the EURES Cross Border Partnership continues to be valued by our end users and the services we provide are held in high regard. We hope this will continue for many years to come.

Information Sources

All sources of information used in this report have been identified and links provided to those sources. This report privileged the examination of data provided primarily by the official statistics agencies in the two jurisdictions on the island of Ireland: the Central Statistics Office (CSO) and the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA). However, in respect of Northern Ireland, some data was sourced from the UK's Office for National Statistics (ONS), and where broader comparative data was required, the report drew on the European Union's statistical office, Eurostat. These sources were given primacy as they are providers of sets of data produced on a regular basis, which allows for much of the information set out in this report to be updated in the future.

Where the report examines cross-border mobility, it also draws on additional material produced by Northern Ireland's Department for the Economy, and in its analysis of data related to the labour market, information was also gathered from data produced by Northern Ireland's Department for Communities. However, in order to supplement information provided by central statistical agencies and government departments in relation to job vacancies, the report also used information produced by recruitment agencies, and Jobcentreonline.com, JobsIreland.ie and IrishJobs.ie.

The Statistics

Before presenting key statistics for the Northern Ireland-Ireland border region, it is important to be aware of the general statistical profile of the two jurisdictions on the island of Ireland.

Key Statistics for Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland

In 2020 the total population of Northern Ireland numbered 1,895,900, an increase of 0.1% or 1,800 people on 2019.⁴⁹ The 2021 population estimate for the Republic of Ireland stood at 5,011,500, representing an increase of 0.7%, or 34,000 people on 2020,⁵⁰ putting the total population of the Ireland of Ireland at approximately 6,907,400. The main driver for Northern Ireland's population increase was natural change (births minus deaths), which was up 5,200 on 2019, with net migration down 3,300. In the Republic of Ireland natural change increased the population by 22,800 in 2021, while net migration contributed 11,200 to the population total.

The population of Northern Ireland comprised 961,400 (50.7%) females and 934,200 (49.3%) males in 2020.⁵¹ This is similar to the 2021 data for the Republic of Ireland where the population is 50.5% female and 49.5% male.⁵² Those populations were spread across their respective jurisdictions so that in 2016 (the most recent data available) the average population density in the Republic of Ireland was 70 persons per km²,⁵³ and in 2020 in Northern Ireland (the most recent data available) it was 139.8 persons per km².⁵⁴

The age profiles of the two populations show that those aged 65 years or more in 2020 made up a greater percentage of Northern Ireland's population (16.9%) than the same cohort within the population of the Republic of Ireland in 2021 (14.8%), as can be seen in Chart 1 below.⁵⁵

⁴⁹ NISRA, "[2020 Mid-year Population Estimates for Northern Ireland](#)", (25 June 2021).

⁵⁰ Note that, at time of writing, the mid-year estimates for Northern Ireland were available up to 2020 while the Republic of Ireland estimates were available up to 2021; CSO [Population and Migration Estimates \(April 2021\)](#).

⁵¹ NISRA, "[NISRA Statistical Bulletin: 2020 Mid-year Population Estimates for Northern Ireland](#)" (25 June 2021).

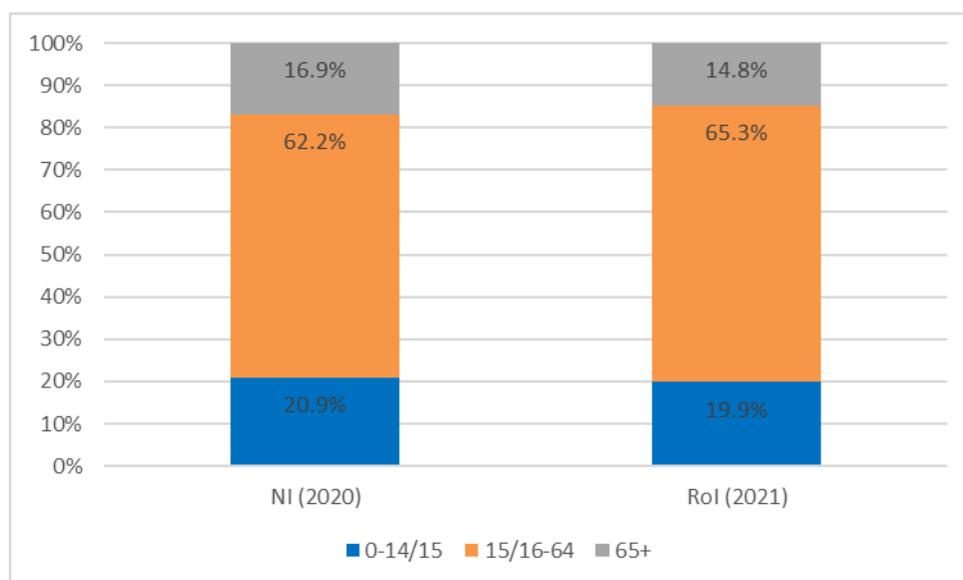
⁵² CSO, "[Population Estimates \(Persons in April\) by Age Group, Sex and Year](#)".

⁵³ CSO, "[Regional SDGs Ireland 2017 – Population density by region, 2016](#)".

⁵⁴ NISRA, "[NISRA Statistical Bulletin: 2020 Mid-year Population Estimates for Northern Ireland – All areas – population densities](#)" (25 June 2021)

⁵⁵ "[NISRA Statistical Bulletin: 2020 Mid-year Population Estimates for Northern Ireland](#)"; CSO, "[Estimated Population classified by Sex and Age Group, 2015 - 2021](#)". It is important to note that while both NISRA and the CSO employ the 65+ age category, there are minor differences in others, with NISRA using 0-15 and 16-64 years for the other age bands, and CSO using 5-year age bands.

Chart 1: Age profiles of the populations of Northern Ireland (2020) and the Republic of Ireland (2021)



NISRA's analysis of its statistics leads to the conclusion that

“Over the three decades from year ending mid-1990 to year ending mid-2020 the median age (i.e. the age at which half the population is older and half is younger) of the Northern Ireland population has increased from 31.0 to 39.2 years. It is projected that from mid-2028 onwards the older population (people aged 65 and over) will be larger than the number of children (i.e. people aged 0 to 15 years)”.⁵⁶

However, while those aged 65 and over in 2020 make up a larger percentage of the population in Northern Ireland than in the Republic of Ireland, in light of the results of the 2016 Census the CSO notes, “While the number of people aged 15-64 increased by 44,477 since 2011, the number of those aged 65 and over rose by 102,174 – more than twice that amount”.⁵⁷ Nevertheless, the percentage of those aged 65 and over in both jurisdictions is significantly below the overall percentage for the EU-27, which stood at 20.6% in 2020.⁵⁸ The percentage of the population over 65 years of age in both jurisdictions on the island of Ireland is also below the UK average, which stood at 18.6% in mid-2020.⁵⁹

In terms of education, in 2019 8.8% of 18-24 year-olds in Northern Ireland were classed as early leavers from education and training which, while decreasing from 9.4% in 2018, is still greater than the equivalent figure of 5% in the Republic of Ireland in 2020, a decrease of 0.1% from 2019.⁶⁰ The disparity between the two jurisdictions on the island of Ireland is further shown by the NISRA estimates based on the Labour Force Survey, and from which it is possible to focus on the 25 to 64 age-group, which shows 12.7% of this cohort as having no

⁵⁶ “NISRA Statistical Bulletin: 2020 Mid-year Population Estimates for Northern Ireland”, p.10.

⁵⁷ CSO, “Census of Population 2016 – Profile 3 An Age Profile of Ireland: Average Age and Dependency”.

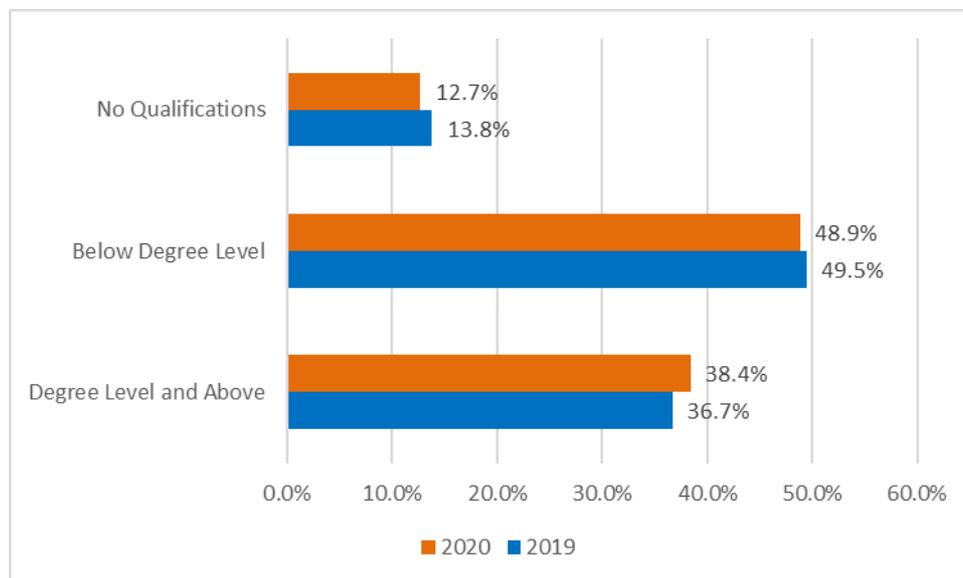
⁵⁸ Eurostat, “Proportion of population aged 65 and over”.

⁵⁹ ONS, “Population estimates for the UK, England and Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland: mid-2020”, (24 June 2020).

⁶⁰ Eurostat, “Early leavers from education and training by sex and NUTS 1 regions”. The equivalent statistic for the EU-27 is 10.2%, while it is 10.9% for the whole of the UK.

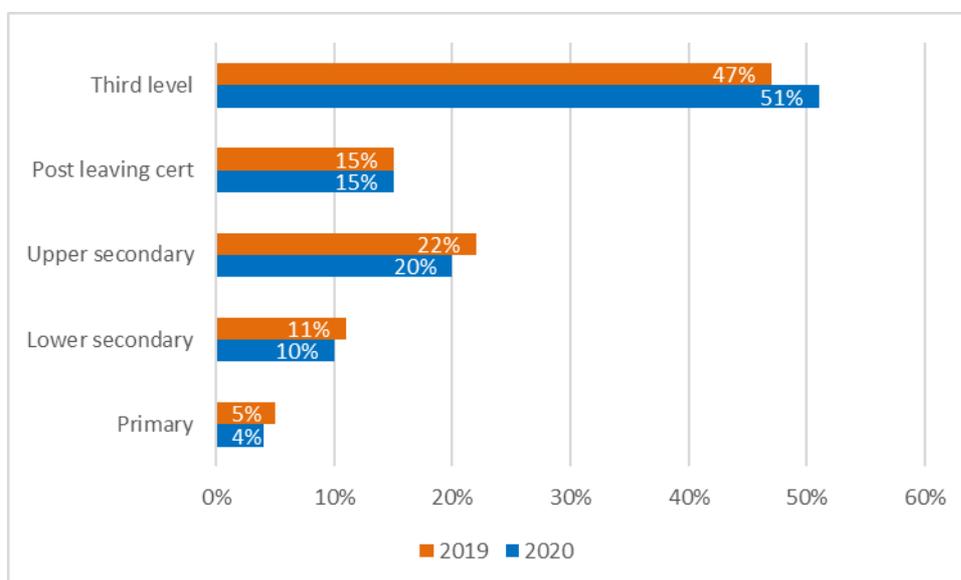
qualifications in 2020, down from 13.8% in 2019.⁶¹ The largest percentage of the 16-64 age group in Northern Ireland (48.9%) have a qualification below degree level (down from 49.5% in 2019), while 38.4% have a qualification at degree level or above, up from 36.7% in 2019.

Chart 2: Highest Qualifications Attained by those aged 16-64 in Northern Ireland (2019 & 2020)



For the Republic of Ireland, the highest level of education attained by those aged 25 to 64 years is shown in Chart 3 below.⁶²

Chart 3: Highest Level of Education Attained by those aged 25-64 in RoI (2019 & 2020)



In contrast to Northern Ireland, in 2020 51% of the population of the Republic of Ireland (bearing in mind the different age categories used in relation to the two jurisdictions) possessed a third level qualification, with 15% achieving a post-leaving cert qualification, and

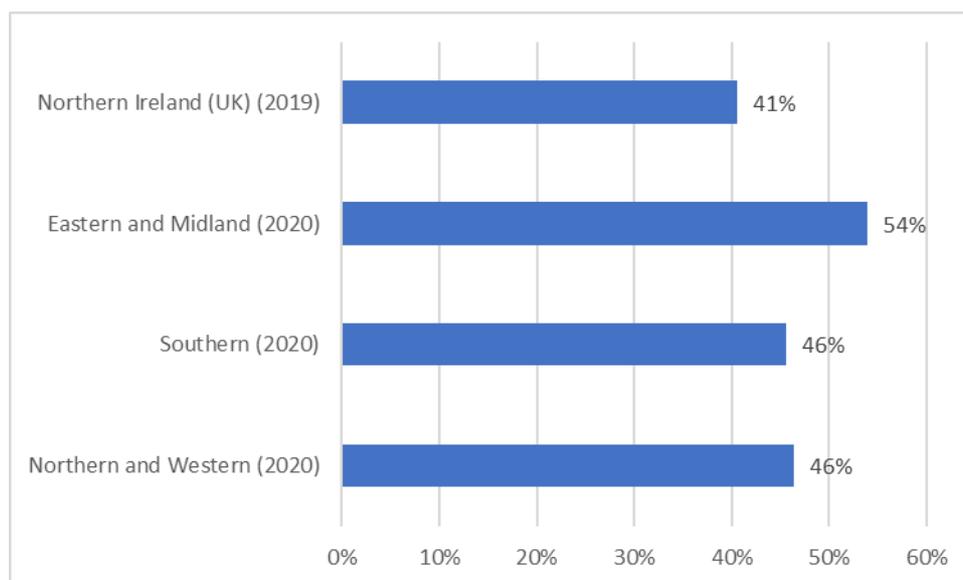
⁶¹ NISRA, [Labour Force Survey Annual Tables 2020](#) (qualifications 2020) (November 2021).

⁶² CSO, [“Persons Aged 25-64 by Nationality, Sex, Education Level and Quarter” \(EDQ03\)](#).

14% of all 25–64-year-olds in the Republic of Ireland having a lower Sec or below level of education, down from 16% in 2019.⁶³

According to Eurostat, in 2019, 40.6% of those aged 25 to 64 in Northern Ireland had attained a tertiary education. In 2020 a higher percentage of 25–64-year-olds had done the same in all three of the Republic of Ireland’s Assembly Regions (equivalent to NUTS 2 regions) as shown in figure 4.⁶⁴

Chart 4: % of 25–64-year-olds having attained tertiary education in Northern Ireland (2019), and in each of the three Regional Assembly areas in the Republic of Ireland (2020)



In terms of engagement in the labour market, the ILO participation rate for those aged 15 and over in the Republic of Ireland in Quarter 2 of 2021 stood at 63.1%, a big jump on the same period in 2020 where the participation rate was 56.9%, and closer to 2019 at 62% (suggesting that 2020 is the effect of the impact of the Covid19 pandemic). The unemployment rate in the second quarter of 2021 was 7.3%, up from 5.4% in both 2019 and 2020.⁶⁵ In Northern Ireland, the employment rate for those aged 16 to 64 was 71.1% in June-August 2021, while the unemployment rate for those aged 16 to 64 in June-August 2021 was 4.1%.⁶⁶

⁶³ Ibid EDQ03.

⁶⁴ Eurostat, [“Tertiary educational attainment, age group 25-64 by sex and NUTS 2 regions” \(TGS00109\)](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/help/faq/brexit). It is important to note the following in terms of the availability of Eurostat data relating to the UK, and therefore the availability of data relating to Northern Ireland: “A new Trade and Cooperation Agreement between the European Union and the United Kingdom has been concluded and applies on a provisional basis as from 1 January 2021. It includes a provision on statistical cooperation that foresees the establishment of a specific arrangement [...]. Until this arrangement on statistical cooperation is established, addressing in particular the scope and means of data transmission, there are changes for the dissemination of UK data by Eurostat, with the exception of cases foreseen in the Protocol on Ireland/Northern Ireland. This means that until agreement on statistical cooperation is established, Eurostat is no longer disseminating new data for the UK, neither through its database nor in other dissemination products” (<https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/help/faq/brexit>).

⁶⁵ CSO, [“ILO Participation and Unemployment Rates by Sex, Quarter and Statistic” \(QLF02\)](https://www.cso.ie/en/press-releases/2021/q2-2021-employment-and-unemployment-rates/).

⁶⁶ NISRA, [Northern Ireland Labour Market Report](https://www.nisra.gov.uk/northern-ireland-labour-market-report), p.1. The economic activity rate in the same period (June-August 2020) for all those aged 16 and over was 60.9%.

Ireland, the employment rate for those aged 16 to 64 was 71.1% in June-August 2021, while the unemployment rate for those aged 16 to 64 in June-August 2021 was 4.1%.⁶⁶

There is, of course, mobility between the two jurisdictions on the island of Ireland for a variety of purposes, and not restricted to those living within the Northern Ireland-Ireland border region. Northern Ireland's Department for the Economy estimates, for example, that just over 118,000 vehicles cross the border each day at 15 major crossing points, totaling 43 million vehicle crossings each year (excluding traffic at other minor crossing points), with the northbound and southbound flows being fairly even.⁶⁷ It also reports one transport company's (Translink, which is the main public transport provider in Northern Ireland) estimate of 900,000 cross-border coach passenger journeys in 2016/17, and a further 868,532 cross-border rail journeys between 2014/15 and 2016/17, with 40% of those travelling on the Enterprise train service between Belfast and Dublin in 2016 doing so for business purposes; 41% of business travelers on the Enterprise were doing so weekly.⁶⁸

The profile of the Northern Ireland-Ireland Border Region

An estimate for the percentage of the total population of the island of Ireland that resided in the Northern Ireland/Ireland Border region in 2020 would place it at 19.8% (using 2020 NISRA data and 2020 CSO data).⁶⁹ This would represent a small increase in the percentage of the border region's population as part of the island's population as a whole (0.1%) from 2019. As we can see in Table 1 overleaf, the overall estimated total population in the Northern Ireland-Ireland border region increased by 0.3%. This rate of increase in the border region was below that of the increase in the estimated total population growth in the Republic of Ireland, which grew by 1.1% in the year to April 2020 (from 4,921,500 in 2019 to 4,997,500 in 2020), but above that of the total population growth in Northern Ireland, which saw growth of 0.1% from mid-2019 to mid-2020 (from 1,893,700 in 2019 to 1,895,500 in 2020) the average rate of population growth in Northern Ireland (0.1%). This is the lowest level of population growth in Northern Ireland since 1999, with net migration being negative (-3,300) for the first time since mid-2013.⁷⁰

⁶⁶ NISRA, [Northern Ireland Labour Market Report](#), p.1. The economic activity rate in the same period (June-August 2020) for all those aged 16 and over was 60.9%.

⁶⁷ Department for the Economy, ["Background Evidence on the Movement of People across the Northern Ireland-Ireland Border"](#), p.11.

⁶⁸ ["Background Evidence on the Movement of People across the Northern Ireland-Ireland Border"](#), pp.13-14.

⁶⁹ NISRA, [2020 Mid-year Population Estimates for Northern Ireland](#) (25 June 2021) and CSO, [Population and Migration Estimates April 2020](#) (20 August 2020). There are more recent CSO population estimates in relation to the Republic of Ireland, for April 2021. These place the population of the Border Regional Authority area at 412,600, which would represent a year-on-year 1.45% increase; CSO, [Population and Migration Estimates April 2021](#) (31 August 2021).

⁷⁰ NISRA, ["NISRA Statistical Bulletin: 2020 Mid-year Population Estimates for Northern Ireland"](#) (25 June 2021).

Table 1: Population of the Northern Ireland-Ireland Border Region⁷¹

	2019	2020	Change
Border	406,700	407,900	0.3%
Louth⁷²	134,903	136,792	1.4%
Armagh, Banbridge & Craigavon	216,200	217,200	0.5%
Newry, Mourne & Down	181,400	181,700	0.2%
Derry & Strabane	151,300	151,100	-0.1%
Mid Ulster	148,500	149,000	0.3%
Fermanagh & Omagh	117,400	117,300	-0.1%
Total	1,356,403	1,360,992	0.3%

Placing these trends in population growth into a historical context, and by using the CSO's 2016 Census data to capture the rates of population growth within the Border Regional Authority's constituent counties,⁷³ we can see that the region grew by 0.6% between 2011 and 2016 (the most recent data available), with the population of County Donegal decreasing by 1.2% in its population from 2011, whereas in Co. Cavan the population grew by 3.9% between 2011 and 2016.⁷⁴ The population is spread unevenly across this geographical area. In 2016 the population density of the Border Regional Authority Area was 35 persons per km², although Co. Louth's population density is estimated to be 156 persons per km², which would make it the second most densely populated in the Northern Ireland-Ireland border region, behind Armagh, Banbridge & Craigavon in Northern Ireland.

When examining the population densities in the Northern Ireland side of the border region there is more up-to-date data available (2020),⁷⁵ with Armagh City, Banbridge & Craigavon having the highest at 161.3 persons per km² (Table 2). These disparities in terms of population densities can be seen as reflecting the region's predominantly rural nature, with a small number of urban clusters.

⁷¹ Data for table 1 taken from map 1 of NISRA [2020 Mid-year Population Estimates for Northern Ireland](#) and table [PEA04](#) from the CSO. Louth data taken from the 2016 CSO census and change made based on 2019 estimates.

⁷² It is crucial to note that the estimate for Co. Louth has been arrived at by applying the rate of change for the Mid-East (of which Co. Louth is a part) for each year from 2016 to 2020 to the population of Louth according to the 2016 census.

⁷³ The term "Border Regional Authority area" is being employed in this study as a means to distinguish administrative areas in the Republic of Ireland from those in Northern Ireland, but this administrative division was abolished following the Local Government Reform Act 2014, which replaced regional authorities with regional assemblies.

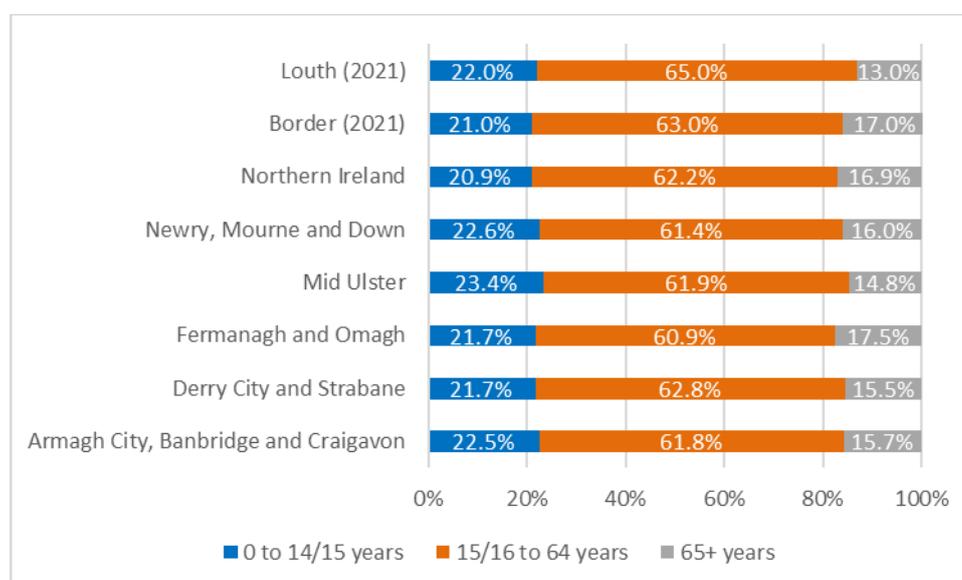
⁷⁴ The population growth in the other counties in the 2011-2016 period was: Sligo 0.2%, Leitrim 0.8%, and Monaghan 1.5%.

⁷⁵ CSO, ["Regional SDGs Ireland 2017 – Population density by region, 2016"](#) and NISRA, ["All Areas – population densities \(2001-2020\)"](#). The source for the population density of Co. Louth was Louth County Council's ["Louth – Healthy County Plan 2018-2022"](#), p.3.

Table 2: Population densities in the Northern Ireland-Ireland border region (2016/20)

Armagh, Banbridge & Craigavon	161.3
Co. Louth (2016)	156
Derry & Strabane	122.1
Newry, Mourne & Down	112.2
Mid Ulster	81.8
Fermanagh & Omagh	41.2
Border Regional Authority Area (2016)	35

The Northern Ireland-Ireland border region contains a relatively higher percentage of younger people in comparison to the overall composition of the populations in the respective jurisdictions, where in the Republic of Ireland 19.9% of the population was aged 0 to 14 in 2021, with those aged 0 to 15 representing 20.9% of the population of Northern Ireland in 2020. As Chart 5 shows, all of the areas within the geographical scope of this study had higher percentages of younger people than the jurisdictions at large.⁷⁶

Chart 5: Age profiles of the population of the Northern Ireland-Ireland border region, % (2020)⁷⁷

Similar to the data for 2019 included in our report last year, Chart 5 shows that in 2020 Fermanagh & Omagh had a slightly higher percentage of those aged 65 and over than the overall figure for Northern Ireland (17.5% compared to 16.9%), which is also the case for the Border Regional Authority area in 2021 in relation to the overall percentage for the Republic of Ireland (17% compared to 14.8%). The overall figure for those aged 65 and over in both

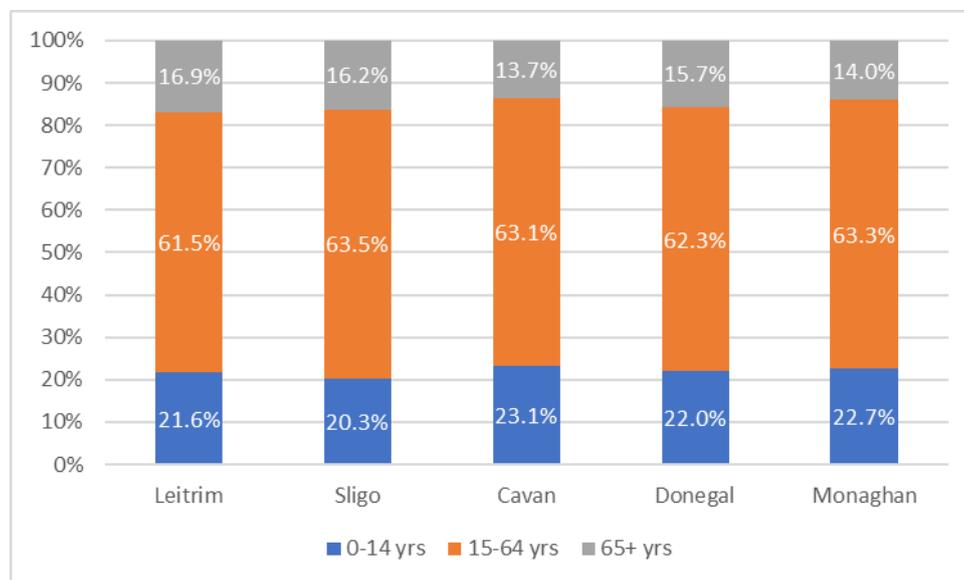
⁷⁶ [“NISRA Statistical Bulletin: 2019 Mid-year Population Estimates for Northern Ireland”](#), p.18; CSO, [“Population Estimates April 2021 \(Persons in April\) by Age Group, Sex and Year”](#). While both NISRA and the CSO employ the 65+ age category, there are minor differences in others, with NISRA using 0-15 and 16-64 years for the other age bands, and CSO using 0-14 and 15-64 years.

⁷⁷ The percent change for Co. Louth has been based upon the average for the Mid-East region in the Republic of Ireland.

jurisdictions has shown an increase, rising to 16.9% from 16.6% in Northern Ireland, and to 14.8% from 14.2% in the Republic of Ireland.

However, in order to gain a more detailed understanding of this feature of the population of the Border Regional Authority area, Chart 6 shows the age profiles for its constituent counties according to the 2016 Census.

Chart 6: Age profiles of the Border Regional Authority Area, % (2016)⁷⁸



According to the 2016 Census, all counties within the Border Regional Authority area had higher percentages of persons aged 65 or over than the overall figure for the Republic of Ireland, which in 2016 stood at 13.4% and, with the exception of Sligo (20.3%), higher proportions of 0–14-year-olds than was the case for the Republic of Ireland as a whole (21.1%).⁷⁹ What can be seen here, and what remains the case in relation to the 2020 figures, is that the Northern Ireland-Ireland border region has higher percentages of both younger and older people relative to the overall population of the island of Ireland, and a lower percentage of those aged between 15 and 64 years of age.

Educational attainment in the Northern Ireland-Ireland border region continues to underperform in relation to general levels of attainment. This deficit can be seen in Table 3 below,⁸⁰ where, with the exception of Newry, Mourne, and Down (41.3%) a lower percentage of those aged between 16 and 64 in local government districts in Northern Ireland abutting the border had achieved an NVQ Level 4 or above than the overall percentage for Northern Ireland in 2020 (38.4%). Of further concern is, again with the exception of Newry, Mourne, and Down (11.1%), the LGDs abutting the border registered a higher percentage of those aged between 16 and 64 with No Qualifications than the national average (12.7%).

⁷⁸ CSO, [Population 2011 to 2016](#) (E2022).

⁷⁹ CSO, [Census of Population 2016 - Profile 3 An Age Profile of Ireland](#).

⁸⁰ NISRA, [Labour Force Survey Tables for Local Government Districts 2009-2020](#) (November 2021).

Table 3: Level of Qualifications attained by % 16 to 64 year-olds in 5 NI LGDs (2020)

	NVQ Level 4 or above	Achieved below NVQ level 4	No Qualifications
Northern Ireland	38.4	48.9	12.7
Armagh, Banbridge & Craigavon	36.3	50.8	12.9
Derry & Strabane	29.8	51.0	19.2
Fermanagh & Omagh	30.1	54.3	15.5
Mid Ulster	33.4	53.5	13.1
Newry, Mourne & Down	41.3	47.6	11.1

Similarly, in Quarter 2 of 2020, 7% of those aged 25 to 64 in the Border Regional Authority area had only attained primary education (a 3% decrease from Q2 2019), compared with 4% of the total population (a 1% decrease from Q2 2019); while in Quarter 2 of 2020 51% of the total population in the Republic of Ireland had achieved a Higher Cert or above (a 5% increase on Q2 2019), only 41% had achieved this in the Border Regional Authority area (this represents a 3% increase on Q2 2019).⁸¹ We can see below how this compares with more historical data.

The 2016 Census results allow us in Table 4 to look at the percentage of those aged 15 years and above in the constituent counties of the Border Regional Authority Area and Co. Louth with third level qualifications, as well as those with no formal or only primary education.⁸²

Table 4: % of those aged 15 and over with 3rd level education, or no formal or only primary education (2016)

	3rd Level	No formal or only primary
Republic of Ireland	42	13.3
Donegal	33.4	21.9
Leitrim	37.7	15.7
Sligo	40.7	14.2
Cavan	33.5	17.8
Monaghan	32.9	18
Louth	36.6	15.8

All of the counties included in the above table registered lower percentages of those with a third level education, and higher percentages of those who had no formal or only primary education than the equivalent figures for the Republic of Ireland as a whole in 2016.

In terms of the nature of the labour market in the Northern Ireland-Ireland border region, given the differences in which data is gathered in the two jurisdictions, we will look at how

⁸¹ CSO, [“Persons Aged 25-64 by Region, Sex, Education Level and Quarter”](#).

⁸² CSO, [“Census of Population 2016 – Profile 10 Education, Skills and the Irish Language/Level of Education”](#).

the geographical areas on either side of the border fare in comparison to their respective jurisdictions, beginning with the employment rate of those aged 16 to 64 in Northern Ireland in 2020. Highlighting those abutting the border, Table 5 displays the ranking of all eleven Local Government Districts in Northern Ireland, from highest to lowest employment rates, with the overall Northern Ireland employment rate included in the rankings.⁸³

Table 5: Employment rate of 16–64-year-olds in Northern Ireland by LDG (2020)

	2019	2020	Change
Lisburn and Castlereagh	81.1%	79.2%	-1.9%
Newry, Mourne and Down	73.6%	74.8%	1.2%
Mid Ulster	75.3%	74.2%	-1.1%
Antrim and Newtownabbey	77.3%	74.1%	-3.2%
Mid and East Antrim	74.2%	72.8%	-1.4%
Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon	72.3%	72.3%	0.0%
Ards and North Down	73.1%	71.6%	-1.5%
Northern Ireland	71.9%	70.9%	-1.0%
Causeway Coast and Glens	67.6%	67.9%	0.3%
Fermanagh and Omagh	65.0%	67.2%	2.2%
Belfast	67.6%	67.0%	-0.6%
Derry City and Strabane	68.0%	62.5%	-5.5%

Our focus in Table 5 remains on the data for the five Local Government District within the Northern Ireland-Ireland border region.⁸⁴ Three of these districts displayed employment rates above the Northern Ireland average of 70.9%, while the remaining two, Fermanagh & Omagh (67.2%) and Derry & Strabane (62.5%) fell below. Of note is that while Derry & Strabane saw an increase of 6.4 points between 2018 and 2019, that has fallen back by 5.5 points in 2020.

While 36,000 people in Northern Ireland were unemployed in October 2021,⁸⁵ which accounted for 4% of the economically active population aged 16 and over (4.8% of the population are included in the claimant count which includes a combination of JSA and certain UC claimants),⁸⁶ Derry & Strabane and Belfast both stand out at a local level in terms of the

⁸³ NISRA, [Labour Force Survey Tables for Local Government Districts 2009-2020](#) (November 2020).

⁸⁴ NISRA, [Labour Force Survey Tables for Local Government Districts 2009-2020](#) (November 2020).

⁸⁵ NISRA, [Northern Ireland Labour Market Report](#) (November 2021).

⁸⁶ NISRA [Claimant count tables](#) (table 1) (November 2021).

statistics relating to the claimant count. Table 6 shows the proportion of residents aged 16 to 64 claiming unemployment-related benefits in September 2021, ranking all eleven local government district areas from the highest to the lowest, and including the overall figure for Northern Ireland.

Table 6: Claimant Count as proportion of resident population aged 16-64 (November 2020 & 2021)

	Nov-20	Sept-21	% Change
Derry & Strabane	5	5.9	+0.9
Belfast	4.4	5.5	+1.1
Northern Ireland ⁸⁷	6	4.9	-1.5
Mid & East Antrim	3.6	4	+0.4
Causeway Coast & Glens	6.3	3.8	-2.5
Ards & North Down	5.1	3.7	-1.4
Newry, Mourne & Down	4.6	3.6	-1
Armagh, Banbridge & Craigavon	4.6	3.5	-1.1
Antrim & Newtown Abbey	4.2	3.4	-0.8
Mid Ulster	4	3.2	-0.8
Fermanagh & Omagh	6.9	3.2	-3.7
Lisburn & Castlereagh	3.9	2.8	-1.1

As can be seen in Table 6 above,⁸⁸ there has been a fall in the proportion of the Northern Ireland population aged 16 to 64 claiming unemployment-related benefits over the course of the last year. The overall claimant count for Northern Ireland has fallen from 6% in November 2020 to 4.9% in September 2021.⁸⁹ Derry and Strabane (5.9%) has the highest percentage of any Local Government District, recording an increase of 0.9%, from November 2020.

Both Derry & Strabane and Belfast are above the overall percentage of claimants for Northern Ireland. Mid & East Antrim is the only area to register an increase in claimants while remaining below the Northern Ireland average.

Table 7 sets out the ILO participation rate of those aged 15 years and over in all NUTS 3 regions in the Republic of Ireland in Quarter 2 of 2020 and 2021, and the overall national rate, ranking them from highest to lowest.⁹⁰

⁸⁷ NISRA [Claimant count tables](#) (table 1).

⁸⁸ NISRA, "[Claimant Count Monthly Data](#)".

⁸⁹ NISRA [Claimant count tables](#) (table 1).

⁹⁰ CSO, "[Labour Force Quarterly Series/QLF08/Persons aged 15 years and over by Region, Quarter and Statistic](#)" (QLF08).

Table 7: ILO Participation Rate by NUT 3 region in the Republic of Ireland % (Q2 2020 & 2021)

	Q2 2020	Q2 2021	% Change
Dublin	60.8	66.4	+5.6
Mid-East	57.2	62.2	+5
West	56.7	63.2	+6.5
Republic of Ireland	56.9	63.1	+6.2
Midland	56.5	62.4	+5.9
South-West	56.3	62.3	+6
Mid-West	54.2	61.8	+7.6
South-East	53.6	59.9	+6.3
Border	50.5	59.7	+9.2

The Border Regional Authority has the lowest ILO Participation rate (59.7%) for Quarter 2 of 2021, but records a significant increase on Q2 2020 of 9.2%. However, it continues to fall below the national participation rate of 63.1%. The Mid-East region, which contains Co. Louth, has also experienced an increase of 5% in ILO participation from Quarter 2 in 2020, from 57.2% to 62.2%.

In order to capture the labour market at county level, Table 8 sets out the labour force participation and unemployment rates for Co. Louth and the constituent counties of the Border Regional Authority area, taken from the CSO's 2016 Census, with the same figures at national level.⁹¹

Table 8: Labour force participation & unemployment rates of persons aged 15 and over (2016)

	Labour Force Participation Rate	Unemployment Rate
Republic of Ireland	61.4%	12.9%
Donegal	57.3%	18%
Sligo	57.9%	14%
Leitrim	59.3%	14.5%
Cavan	61.3%	15.1%
Monaghan	61.9%	13%
Louth	60.9%	16.7%

All of the counties included in the above table registered higher rates of unemployment in 2016 than the overall national rate, although Co. Monaghan recorded a 0.5% higher labour force participation than Ireland's overall rate, and with Co. Cavan only 0.1% below the

⁹¹ CSO, "[Labour Force Participation and Unemployment Rate of Population Aged 15 Years and Over 2011 to 2016 by Sex, County and City, Age Group, Census Year and Statistic](#)".

national rate. Donegal's high unemployment rate (18%) in 2016 was actually an improvement on the rate recorded in the 2011 Census, where it stood at 26.2%.

Although comparisons of the economies of the two jurisdictions on the island of Ireland are difficult due to the differences in scale, we can nevertheless gain some understanding of the levels of productivity and income within the two jurisdictions, and how the Northern Ireland-Ireland border region fares.

Table 9 sets out the Gross Value Added (GVA) produced in each of the 11 local government district areas in 2018 and 2019, ranking them from highest value of goods or services produced per person to lowest, and including the overall rate for Northern Ireland.⁹² However, it is important to remember that this statistic refers to the value of goods and services produced per person in each location, and therefore those actually producing those goods and services may not be residents of that location and could be commuting there from another place.

Table 9: GVA per head for NUTS 3 areas in Northern Ireland (2018 & 2019)

Region name	2018	2019
Northern Ireland	21,859	22,298
Belfast	38,020	38,714
Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon	18,054	18,465
Newry, Mourne and Down	16,829	17,485
Ards and North Down	12,709	12,900
Derry City and Strabane	18,964	19,643
Mid Ulster	22,642	23,169
Causeway Coast and Glens	15,043	15,170
Antrim and Newtownabbey	22,345	22,593
Lisburn and Castlereagh	21,351	21,746
Mid and East Antrim	16,937	17,070
Fermanagh and Omagh	18,926	19,352

As we can see in Table 9, apart from Mid Ulster (£23,169), in 2019 the NUTS 3 areas which are part of the Northern Ireland-Ireland border region fall below the overall Northern Ireland average for GVA per head (£22,298), with Newry, Mourne & Down the lowest ranked of the Northern Ireland border region (£17,485). As well as being below the Northern Ireland

⁹² Office for National Statistics, "[Regional gross value added \(balanced\) per head and income components](#)" (26 May 2021)

average, Ards & North Down and Causeway Coast & Glens are the lowest and third lowest NUTS 3 areas in the UK respectively. Belfast, as the highest ranked area in Northern Ireland, is above the overall Northern Ireland GVA and is also 17th in the overall UK standings.

In the Republic of Ireland, Dublin (in a similar manner to Belfast) outstripped all other locations in the Republic of Ireland in terms of estimated GVA per head in 2019; with the Republic's overall GVA per head standing at €67,637 in 2019 (increasing by 7.5% from 2018), Dublin's was €99,362 (an increase of 9.5% on 2018). Bearing in mind that no figures are available for GVA per head for the Mid-West or South-West,⁹³ Table 10 shows where the Border Regional Authority area and the Mid-East (which includes Co. Louth) were placed in relation to all other NUTS 3 areas for GVA per head in 2019.⁹⁴

Table 10: GVA per head for NUTS 3 areas in the Republic of Ireland, excluding the Mid-West and South-West (2018 & 2019)

	2018	2019	% Change
Border	21,682	23,441	8%
Dublin	90,736	99,362	9.5%
Mid-East	39,290	42,446	8%
Midland	20,890	22,597	8%
Republic of Ireland	62,906	67,637	7.5%
South East	43,631	46,956	7.6%
West	27,121	29,260	7.9%

While Co. Louth is within an area that performed comparatively well in terms of GVA per head in relation to elsewhere in the Republic of Ireland in 2018 and 2019 (second to Dublin), it must be appreciated that Dublin punches far and above any other region of the country in terms of GVA. The Border Regional Authority area was only higher than the Midland area in terms of the value of goods or services produced per person. It is, however, important to note that the Border Regional Authority area did record an increase in its GVA of 8% between 2018 and 2019. Again, it is also important to recall that elements of the population of the Border Regional Authority Area may be commuting to another area where they will be contributing to that place's GVA.

In order to reach a better understanding of the economic status of the population of the Northern Ireland-Ireland border region, given that some people may be commuting elsewhere to work, we can look at the levels of disposable income in the border region. Table

⁹³ The CSO's explanation for the absence of figures for these two areas is "suppressed for reasons of confidentiality". Also note that the data for 2019 is preliminary.

⁹⁴ CSO, "[Table 9c: GVA per Person at Basic Prices, 2010 to 2019](#)".

11 sets out the gross disposable household income (GDHI) per head across the NUTS 3 areas of Northern Ireland in 2019, as estimated by the Office of National Statistics.⁹⁵

Table 11: GDHI per head (£) for NUTS 3 areas in Northern Ireland (2018 & 2019)

Region name	2018	2019
Northern Ireland	16,884	17,331
Belfast	16,459	16,974
Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon	16,320	16,649
Newry, Mourne and Down	16,250	16,728
Ards and North Down	18,464	18,925
Derry City and Strabane	14,936	15,331
Mid Ulster	16,719	17,164
Causeway Coast and Glens	16,819	17,219
Antrim and Newtownabbey	17,303	17,723
Lisburn and Castlereagh	19,401	19,774
Mid and East Antrim	17,950	18,496
Fermanagh and Omagh	15,880	16,403

There are two striking features from the above table. One is that Belfast, despite being the NUTS 3 area that saw by far the highest value of goods and services being produced per person in 2019 in all of Northern Ireland (and even ranking among the top 20 in all of the UK), it is also an area where the disposable income of its population (£16,974) is lower per head than that of the overall figure for Northern Ireland (£17,331). The second is that all of Northern Ireland's NUTS 3 areas within the Northern Ireland-Ireland border region have households with lower gross disposable income per head than the Northern Ireland average. Mid Ulster is the highest with £17,164 per person, while Derry City and Strabane is the lowest with £15,331. These are continuing features, identified in our previous reports.

The levels of estimated disposable income per head across the Republic of Ireland's NUTS 3 areas in 2017 and 2018 are shown in Table 12.⁹⁶

⁹⁵ ONS, "[Regional gross disposable household income: all NUTS level regions 1997-2019](#)". (14 October 2021)

⁹⁶ CSO, [Table 3: Estimates of Disposable Income Per Person by Region and County, 2009 to 2018](#)" (24 February 2021)

Table 12: Disposable income per person for NUTS 3 areas in the Republic of Ireland (2017 & 2018)

	2017	2018
Border	17,192	17,391
West	18,465	18,593
Dublin	23,621	24,969
Mid East	21,243	21,982
Midland	17,809	17,389
Mid West	20,626	21,035
South East	18,602	19,150
South West	19,865	20,684
Republic of Ireland	20,578	21,270

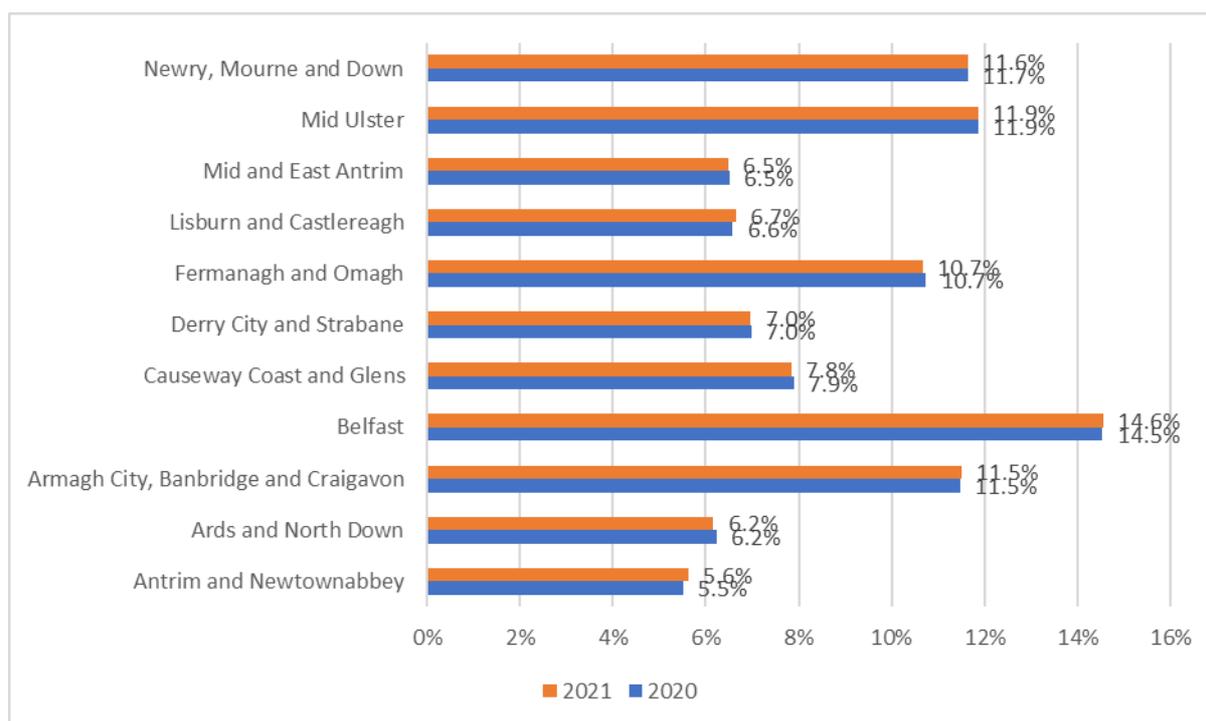
Unlike the case with Belfast in Table 11, which relates to the GDHI for Northern Ireland, Dublin had the highest disposable income per head of all the NUTS 3 areas in the Republic of Ireland in 2018, and as was shown above in Table 10, it also had the highest GVA per head in 2019 (€99,362). There were only two NUTS 3 areas in the Republic of Ireland (Dublin & Mid-East) that outperformed the national average for disposable income per person (€21,270) in 2018, compared to four areas in 2018 and 2019 in Northern Ireland. While the Mid-East includes Co. Louth, Table 12 shows the Border area as having the second lowest disposable income per person, only marginally above the midland area, meaning the border has moved off of its position at the bottom of the table in 2017.

Estimates at county level show that in 2018 Co. Donegal had the lowest levels of disposable income per person (€16,490) of all Republic of Ireland counties in the Northern Ireland-Ireland border region, with Co. Louth having the highest (€19,987), followed by Co. Leitrim (€18,841) and Co. Sligo (€18,306). Indeed, as noted in our previous reports, Co. Donegal's figures are the main contributors to the low overall figure for the Border Regional Authority area (€17,370), since all the other counties within it posted levels of disposable income above the region's average.

Opportunities for employment within the Northern Ireland-Ireland border region can begin to be gauged by the number of active businesses located within it, and what percentage this represents of businesses within the respective jurisdictions. In Northern Ireland, for example, there were 77,640 registered businesses in 2021, an increase of 1,550 active businesses from 2020 (76,090). Continuing on a strong showing in 2020, the NUTS 3 areas abutting the border held a significant share of businesses in 2021, as shown in Chart 7.⁹⁷

⁹⁷ Calculated on the basis of data in "Table 3.1: Number of VAT and/or PAYE Registered Businesses Operating in Northern Ireland by District Council Area, 2013-2021", in NISRA, "[Edition 24 – Facts and Figures from the IDBR](#)" (1 June 2021).

Chart 7: % of VAT/PAYE registered businesses NUTS 3 area in Northern Ireland (2020 & 2021)



Belfast has the highest percentage of registered businesses in Northern Ireland in 2021 with 14.6% (11,300) of active businesses in Northern Ireland located in the area. Repeating a pattern noted in our previous reports, the five NUTS 3 areas in the Northern Ireland-Ireland border region account for a total of 52.7% of active businesses in Northern Ireland, with the largest single area, Mid Ulster, accounting for 11.9% or 9,220 businesses. Newry, Mourne & Down and Mid Ulster each registered the largest increase of the five NUTS 3 regions in the number of businesses, each up by 2% on 2020. As we will see in Chart 8 below, Northern Ireland has a more evenly spread share of businesses across its NUTS 3 areas when compared to the Republic of Ireland.

Figures for 2019 show that there were 272,531 active enterprises in the Republic of Ireland, an increase of 2,187 on 2018 (270,344). Chart 8 below sets out how they were dispersed across the NUTS 3 areas.⁹⁸ However, it is important to note that whilst enterprises in the food products, beverages and tobacco sector are included in the CSO estimates, agricultural businesses (farms) are not. Ireland's Agriculture and Food Development Authority, Teagasc, states "The Census of Agriculture 2016 showed there were 137,500 farms compared to 139,860 farms in the 2010 Census of Agriculture".⁹⁹

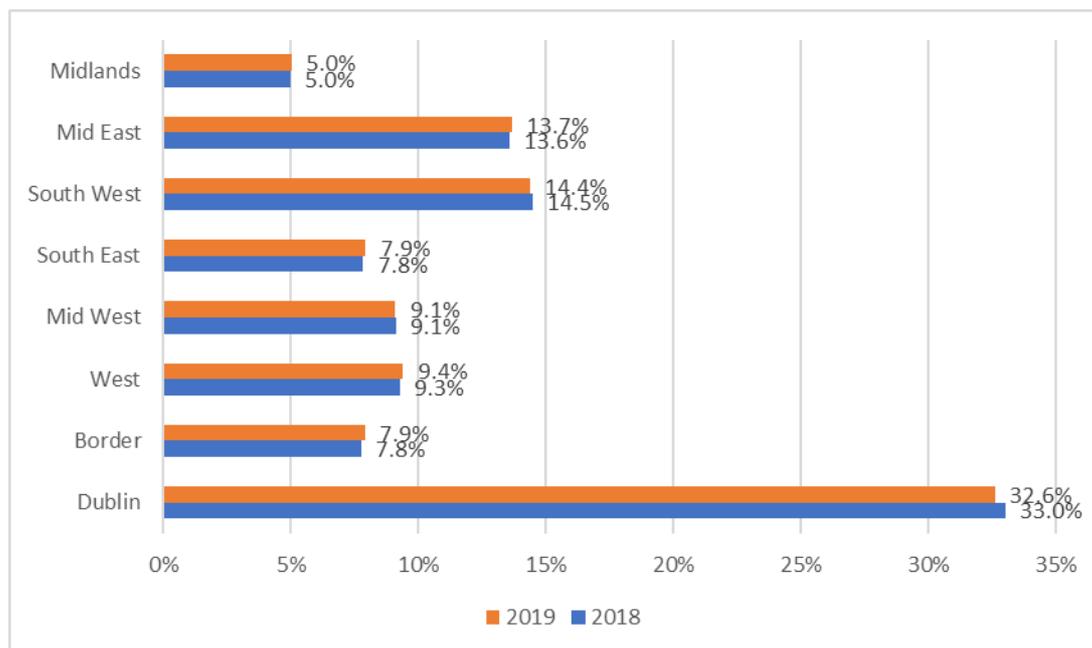
While in Northern Ireland Belfast may hold the largest percentage of active businesses (as per Chart 7), it is only 2.6% ahead of its nearest rival, Mid Ulster. The landscape is somewhat different in the Republic of Ireland, as is shown in Chart 8. Dublin contained 32.6%, or 83,467, of businesses in 2019 (down from 33% and 88,161 businesses in 2018), and the capital

⁹⁸ Calculated from data in CSO, "[Business Demography NACE Rev 2 by Employment Size, County, Year and Statistic](#)" (BRA08).

⁹⁹ Teagasc, "[Agriculture in Ireland](#)".

continues to outstrip all other NUTS 3 areas in the Republic of Ireland by some distance. In second place came the South-West, which was home to 14.4% of businesses in 2019. The Mid-East, including Co. Louth, accounts for the third largest share (13.7%), with the Border Regional Authority area having one of the lowest shares (7.9%). However, when examining the figures at county level, it is worth noting that Co. Donegal has a larger representation of active enterprises than all other Irish counties within the Northern Ireland-Ireland border region. Indeed, the county is home to 40% of all businesses in the Republic of Ireland Border area.

Chart 8: % of active enterprises by NUTS 3 area in the Republic of Ireland (2018 & 2019)

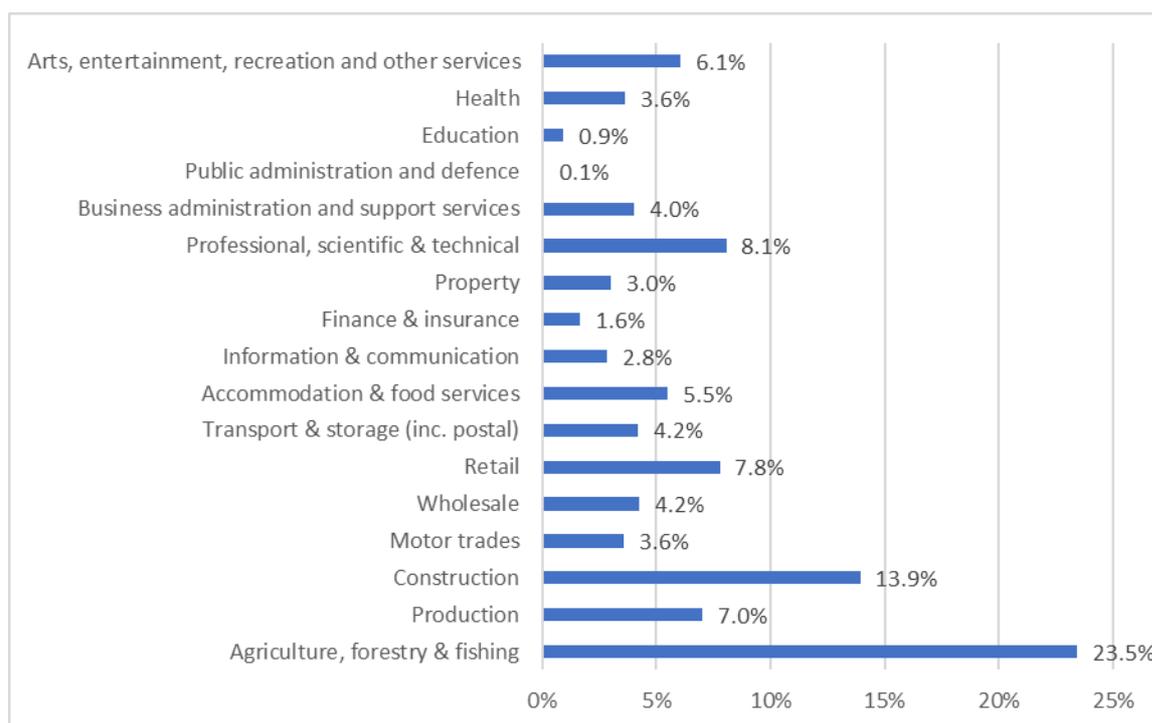


Bearing in mind important underlying differences in how the CSO and NISRA estimate the numbers of businesses in their respective jurisdictions, in 2019 (the earliest year for which the relevant data is available for both jurisdictions) there were 66,606 businesses in the Northern Ireland-Ireland border region (39,970 in the five NUTS 3 areas on the Northern Ireland side of the border, and 26,636 in the Border Regional Authority area and Co. Louth on the other side). This meant a small increase in the number of businesses on the Northern Ireland side from 2018 (when there were 39,115 businesses), and a decrease on the Republic of Ireland side (which had 27,343 businesses in 2018). From these statistics, therefore, 19.1% of businesses on the island of Ireland in 2019 were located in the Northern Ireland-Ireland border region.

The nature of the businesses active in the Northern Ireland-Ireland border region needs to be understood within the overall business landscape in the two jurisdictions. Chart 9, therefore, sets out the weight of a range of business activities in Northern Ireland as a percentage of all businesses registered in 2021 (77,640).¹⁰⁰

¹⁰⁰ NISRA, "Table 3.2: Number of VAT and/or PAYE Registered Businesses Operating in Northern Ireland by District Council Area and Broad Industry Group, 2021", in "[Edition 24 – Facts and Figures from the IDBR](#)" (10 June 2021).

Chart 9: % of businesses in Northern Ireland by Broad Industry Group (2021)



Agriculture, forestry and fishing businesses continue to dominate the business landscape in Northern Ireland, despite a decrease of 0.6% from 2020, representing 23.5% of all businesses, with construction maintaining a significant presence at 13.9%, followed by professional, scientific and technical enterprises (8.1%). Retail is the next largest share of businesses with 7.8%, up 0.1% on 2020. According to the Northern Ireland Skills Barometer, produced in July 2019, while there may be many agriculture businesses in Northern Ireland, they only represent 3.3% of all employee jobs, whereas health has over 15% of employee jobs.¹⁰¹ The business landscape within the five NUTS 3 areas in Northern Ireland abutting the border shows some significant differences, with Fermanagh & Omagh being a notable example.

The agriculture, forestry and fishing sector represented 44.8% of all businesses in Fermanagh & Omagh in 2021 (slightly down from 2020, when it represented 45.6%). To put this in context, the proportion of businesses in Agriculture, forestry and fishing across all areas in Northern Ireland is 23.5%. Every other sector in Fermanagh & Omagh is below the Northern Ireland average; production makes up 5.7% of business in Fermanagh & Omagh against an average of 7%, wholesale is 1.1% below the average, retail 1.5% below, accommodation and food services is 2.3% below, information and communication 2.2% below, and arts, entertainment and recreation is 2.5% below. But the sector that is most significantly underrepresented in Fermanagh & Omagh is professional, scientific and technical, where the area is 4% below the average figure for Northern Ireland. This difference is down by 0.2 points on 2020 where the sector in Fermanagh was 4.2% below the national average. This, however,

¹⁰¹ See Ulster University Economic Policy Centre, [“Northern Ireland Skills Barometer – Summary report”](#) (July 2019), p.4.

is a common feature across all five of the NUTS 3 areas where this sector has a lower presence, although Fermanagh & Omagh shows the greatest discrepancy.¹⁰²

Of the five border areas, Mid Ulster has the second highest representation of agriculture, forestry and fishing, at 35% of all businesses in the area in 2021. It also has a more significant presence of production (9.3% against an average of 7%), and construction (17.1% against an average of 13.9%) businesses than is the case for the Northern Ireland average, but a significantly lower representation of businesses in retail (6.2% against 7.8%), accommodation and food services (2.2% lower than the average), information and communication (1.8% lower), arts, entertainment and recreation (2.7% lower), and professional, scientific and technical (3.2% lower).¹⁰³

Agriculture, forestry and fishing is also an important business sector in Newry, Mourne & Down (26% of all businesses and 2.5% above the average), but the representation of the construction sector is proportionally more significant (17.9%) compared to the Northern Ireland average of 13.9%. The sector most underrepresented in Newry, Mourne & Down is professional, scientific and technical, which is 1.6% below the overall average for Northern Ireland, with all other sectors within 1 point of the Northern Ireland average.¹⁰⁴

In Armagh, Banbridge & Craigavon, meanwhile, while agriculture, forestry and fishing represented 26.7% of all businesses in the area in 2021, a number of other sectors were more strongly represented than was the case for the Northern Ireland average. These included production (7.7% compared to an average of 7%), motor trades (4.1% to an average of 3.6%), wholesale (5%), retail (8.5%), and transport and storage (5.4%). Of those sectors where representation was significantly below the overall figure for Northern Ireland, accommodation and food services (4.1%), and professional, scientific and technical (6.4%) saw the greatest differences (1.4% and 1.7% lower respectively).

The presence of Agriculture, forestry and fishing in Derry & Strabane was at the Northern Ireland average in 2021, at 23.3%. Motor trades (4%), retail (7.9%), accommodation and food services (5.8%), and arts, entertainment and recreation (6.4%) all featured more prominently in Derry & Strabane than the average across Northern Ireland. But health (4.2%) and construction (16.3%) had the greatest comparative presence in relation to the Northern Ireland average. Of the sectors less well represented in Derry & Strabane than is the case in Northern Ireland as a whole, the transport and storage sector registered the greatest discrepancy, at 1.2% below the equivalent figure for Northern Ireland (3% compared to 4.2%).

In 2021, therefore, 71% of all businesses in the agriculture, forestry and fishing sector in Northern Ireland were located within the five NUTS 3 areas adjoining the border (up 0.2% on 2020), which also contained 59.6% of all construction businesses, 47.3% of all transport and

¹⁰² NISRA, "Table 3.2: Number of VAT and/or PAYE Registered Businesses Operating in Northern Ireland by District Council Area and Broad Industry Group, 2021", in ["Edition 24 – Facts and Figures from the IDBR"](#) (10 June 2021).

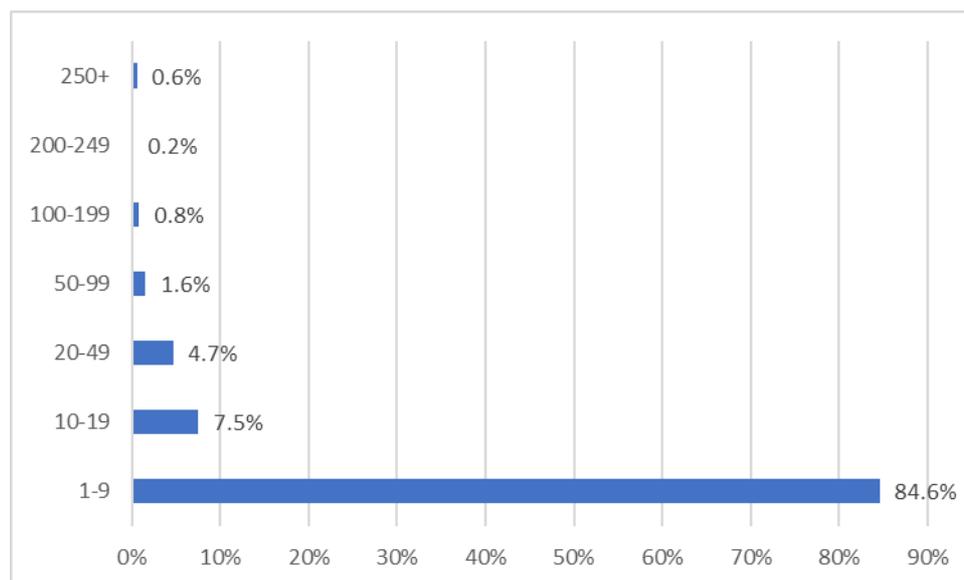
¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ NISRA, "Table 3.2: Number of VAT and/or PAYE Registered Businesses Operating in Northern Ireland by District Council Area and Broad Industry Group, 2021", in ["Edition 24 – Facts and Figures from the IDBR"](#) (10 June 2021).

storage businesses, 55.5% of all production businesses, and 48.8% of all retail businesses. In contrast, the same areas only contained 26.9% of all information and communication businesses, 36.2% of all finance and insurance businesses, and 37.2% of all professional, scientific and technical businesses.

Smaller enterprises employing less than ten people predominate in Northern Ireland, with only 335 companies having more than 250 employees (up from 310 in 2020), which accounts for 0.6% of businesses with one or more employees, as can be seen in Chart 10.¹⁰⁵

Chart 10: % of VAT and/or PAYE registered businesses in Northern Ireland by employee size band (2021)



Businesses employing less than ten people have a higher presence in all five of the Northern Ireland NUTS 3 areas in the Northern Ireland-Ireland border region than the 84.6% Northern Ireland average (which was 84.3% in 2020), with Fermanagh & Omagh having the highest representation of such businesses (88.4%). However, while smaller businesses also dominate in Derry & Strabane, it has higher percentages of businesses employing 10 to 19 people (7.7%) than is the Northern Ireland average.

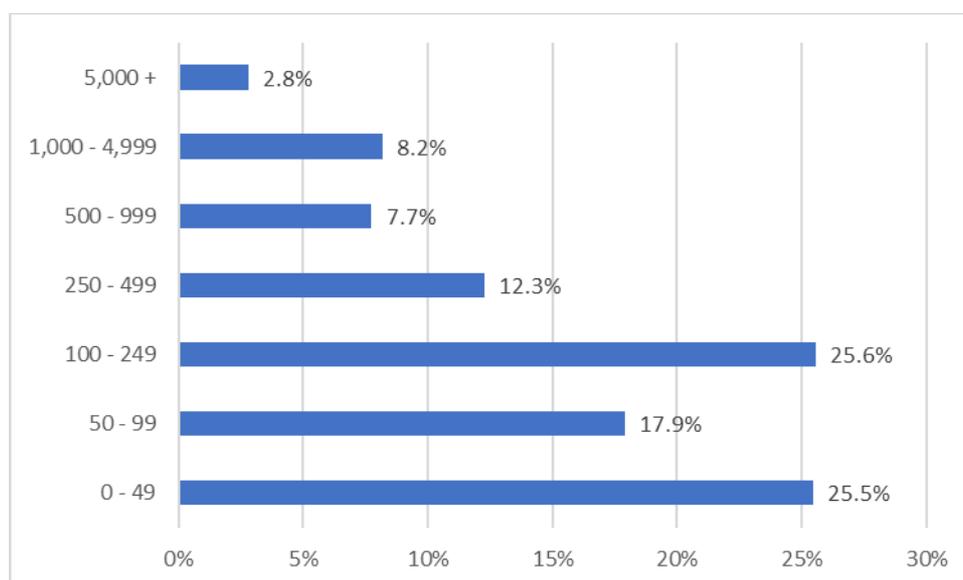
As can be seen in Chart 11,¹⁰⁶ the majority of businesses in Northern Ireland had a turnover of less than £250,000 in 2021, with only 2.8% registering a turnover of £5million or more, which remains unchanged from 2020. As in many other aspects, however, Belfast diverges substantially from the pattern elsewhere, having a much lower percentage of businesses with a turnover of £49,000 or lower (12.1%, although this represents an increase from 11.2% in

¹⁰⁵ Calculated from NISRA estimates in “Table 3.4: Number of VAT and/or PAYE Registered Businesses Operating in Northern Ireland by District Council Area and Employee Size Band, 2021”, [“Edition 24 – Facts and Figures from the IDBR”](#) (10 June 2021). It is important to note that in our calculations we have discounted holding companies and registered companies not yet trading, which account for 23,930 of all registered businesses. This means our calculations are based on a total of 53,710 businesses with one or more employees.

¹⁰⁶ NISRA, “Table 3.3: Number of VAT and/or PAYE Registered Businesses Operating in Northern Ireland by District Council Area and Turnover Size Band, 2021”, [“Edition 24 – Facts and Figures from the IDBR”](#). (10 June 2021).

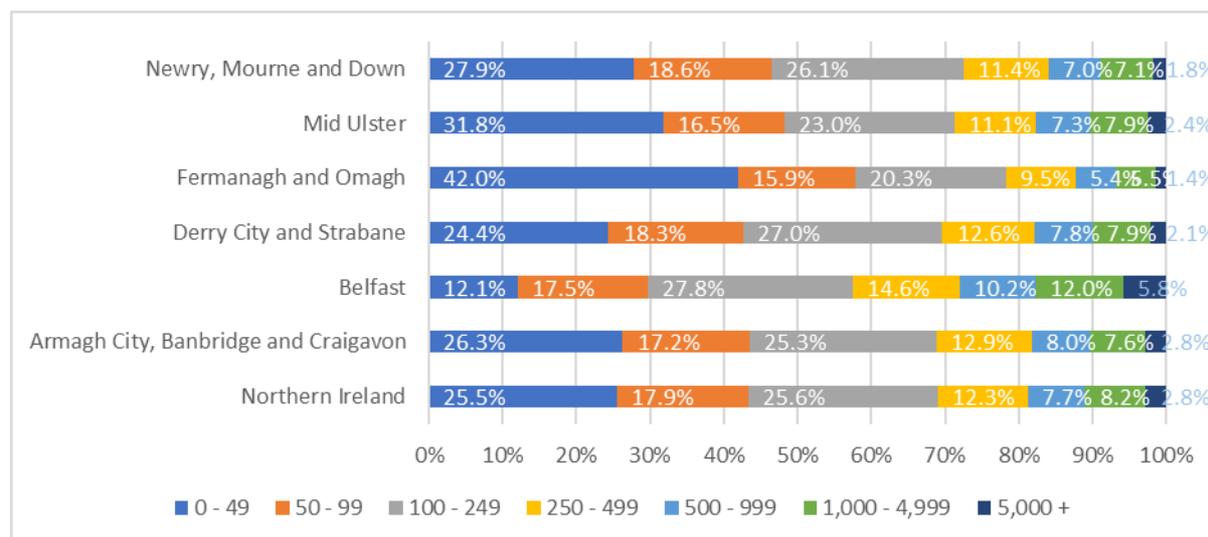
2020), and a much higher percentage of those with a turnover of £5 million or more (5.8%, which remains unchanged from 2020).

Chart 11: % of registered businesses in Northern Ireland by turnover size band (2021)



Over 80% of Northern Ireland businesses have a turnover of less than £500,000 per year, a quarter turning over less than £50,000. This pattern is felt somewhat more acutely in most of the NUTS 3 areas adjoining the border, with 42% of businesses in Fermanagh & Omagh having a turnover of less than £50,000 in 2021, and only 1.4% with a turnover of £5 million or more, as shown in Chart 12.

Chart 12: % of registered businesses by turnover size band, £ thousands (2021)

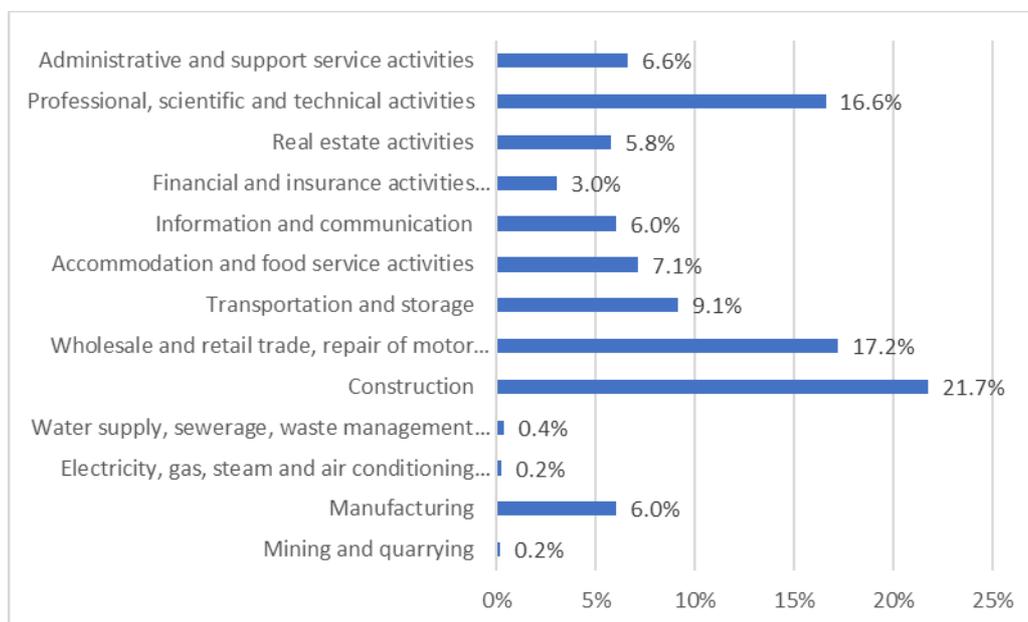


Newry, Mourne a & Down and Derry & Strabane both continue to distinguish themselves from the other Northern Ireland NUTS 3 areas in the Northern Ireland-Ireland border region. As was the case in the previous year, in 2021 they had a higher percentage of businesses in the £100,000 to £249,000 band than the Northern Ireland average. Newry, Mourne & Down and Derry and Strabane were also above the Northern Ireland average in the £50,000 to £99,000

bracket, as was Armagh, Banbridge, and Craigavon in the £250,000 to £499,000 bracket and joined by Derry & Strabane in the £500,000 to £999,000 cohort. Four of the five NUTS 3 areas in Northern Ireland which abut the Northern Ireland/Ireland border fell below the overall Northern Ireland level for £5,000,000+ turnover, with Armagh Banbridge & Craigavon the area managing to match the overall level of 2.8%.

Given the different methodologies employed by the CSO and NISRA in categorizing business activity in their respective jurisdictions, particularly in terms of how agricultural activity is accounted for separately in the Republic of Ireland, straightforward comparisons of the business landscapes on either side of the Northern Ireland-Ireland border cannot be made. However, Chart 13 sets out the percentages of businesses involved in a range of activities in the Republic of Ireland in 2019, with the total number of businesses (excluding the activities of holding companies) at 272,531.¹⁰⁷

Chart 13: % of active enterprises in the Republic of Ireland by activity (2019)



We can see how construction (21.7%), wholesale and retail (17.2%), and professional, scientific and technical (16.6%) represent significant areas of business activity in the Republic of Ireland. This pattern is replicated across almost all of the Irish counties within the Northern Ireland-Ireland border region, with construction having a proportionally greater presence here (representing 29.8% of businesses in Co. Cavan in 2019, and even in county Louth, which has the lowest proportion of Construction of the border counties has 22.6%, above the national average). The wholesale and retail trade was most strongly represented in Co. Monaghan (24.4% of all businesses in 2019), and had a weaker presence in Co. Sligo (18.5%). Co. Donegal and Co Leitrim differed from other counties in that businesses in the accommodation and food service sector were more strongly represented than those in the professional, scientific and technical sector, with accommodation accounting for 12% in Donegal and 11.7% in Leitrim, against 9.3% and 11.6% respectively for professional sector

¹⁰⁷ CSO, [“Table 1: Active Enterprises \(Number\) by Activity and Year”](#). (02 July 2021) – note this analysis excludes the activities of holding companies

businesses. In the other counties the professional, scientific and technical sector was the third most represented, with the exception of Monaghan, which had construction (28.5%), wholesale (24.4%) and manufacturing (10.1%), with professional scientific, and technical in ranked 4th, with 8.8% of business in the county in that sector.

As noted earlier, agriculture is not included in the CSO data we have been referring to. However, it is noteworthy that 20.6% (approximately 28,400) of all Ireland's farm holdings in 2016 were located in the Border Regional Authority Area.¹⁰⁸

As can be seen in Table 13,¹⁰⁹ the predominance of businesses employing ten people or less in the Republic of Ireland in 2019 (91.4%) appears to be even stronger than in Northern Ireland, where in 2021 they accounted for 84.6%.

Table 13: % of Republic of Ireland active enterprises by employment size (2019)

	Under 10 employees	10 to 19	20 to 49	50 to 249	250+
Republic of Ireland	91.4%	4.3%	2.7%	1.3%	0.3%
Cavan	90.5%	5.3%	2.8%	1.2%	0.2%
Donegal	93.8%	3.5%	2.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Leitrim	91.8%	4.1%	2.9%	0.0%	0.0%
Louth	91.6%	4.5%	2.5%	1.3%	0.1%
Monaghan	90.8%	5.2%	2.8%	1.1%	0.1%
Sligo	89.7%	5.7%	2.8%	1.7%	0.1%

The Irish border counties' business demography in terms of the sizes of its businesses is broadly in line with that of the Republic of Ireland on average, with the vast majority of businesses in Ireland's border counties employing less than ten people. However, Donegal (93.8%), Leitrim (91.8%) and Louth (91.6%), have higher levels of businesses with under 10 employees than the overall national level (91.4%).¹¹⁰

Returning to Northern Ireland, Chart 14 details the percentage of employee jobs in Northern Ireland by broad sector according to NISRA's Quarterly Employment Survey for Q2 of 2021.¹¹¹ As the Chart shows, of the 771,680 total employee jobs in Q2 of 2021, the majority were in

¹⁰⁸ CSO, "[Table 2.1: Number of Farms by Farm Size \(AAU\) and Region 2016](#)".

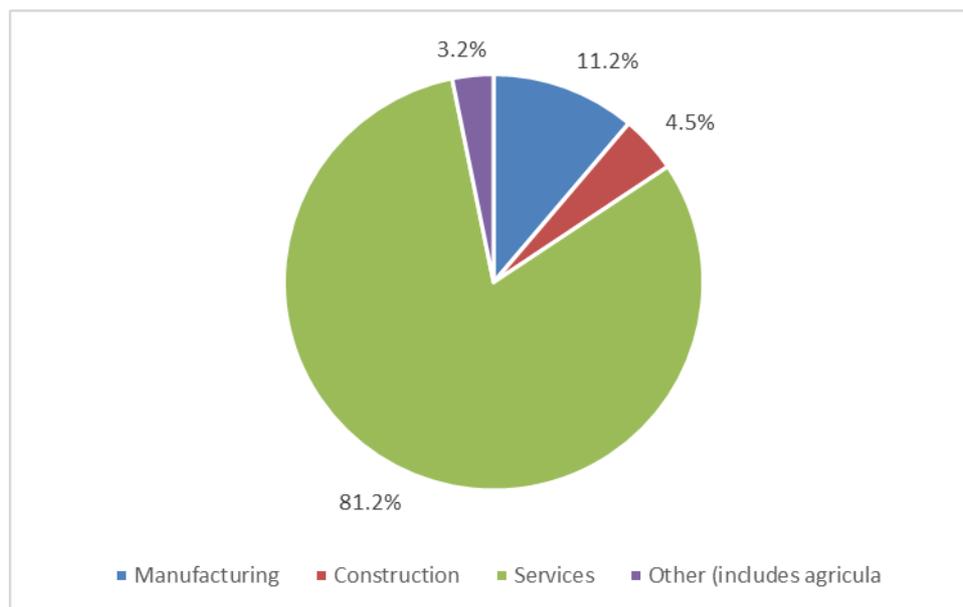
¹⁰⁹ CSO, "[BRA08: Business Demography NACE Rev 2 by Employment Size, County, Year and Statistic](#)", (1 October 2021).

¹¹⁰ Leitrim is also above the national level with 93.8% but this percentage has been influenced by the lack of available data for the county due to reasons of confidentiality.

¹¹¹ NISRA, "[Northern Ireland Quarterly Employment Survey](#)" (14 September 2021), p.2.

services, totaling 626,670 or 81.2% (a decrease of 0.5% in the number of total employee jobs from Q2 of 2020). Manufacturing occupied the second largest share with 11.2% (86,080) for Q2 2021, representing a 1.4% decrease in total employee jobs from 2020. The construction sector accounted for 4.5% (34,390) of total employee jobs in Q2 2021, while the “other” category (which includes agriculture) accounted for 3.2% (24,530). Both these categories also saw falls in the numbers of their respective total employee jobs in relation to Q2 2020, with construction falling by 2% and other by 0.2%.

Chart 14: % of employee jobs in Northern Ireland by broad sector (Q2 2021)



However, there are some significant differences in terms of the sectoral distribution of employment in the five of Northern Ireland’s NUTS 3 areas within the Northern Ireland-Ireland border region, particularly in relation to the relative importance of the services sector.¹¹²

Table 14: % of employee jobs by broad sector in NUTS 3 areas in Northern Ireland (2020)

	Construction	Manufacturing	Other	Services	agriculture
Armagh City, Banbridge & Craigavon	4.8%	16.6%	1.4%	74.4%	2.8%
Derry City & Strabane	5.2%	10.1%	1.4%	81.8%	1.5%
Fermanagh & Omagh	7.3%	13.9%	2.4%	72.5%	3.8%
Mid Ulster	9.4%	27.3%	2.0%	58.4%	2.9%
Newry, Mourne & Down	6.9%	12.3%	2.5%	75.6%	2.8%
Northern Ireland	4.7%	11.0%	1.6%	81.2%	1.5%

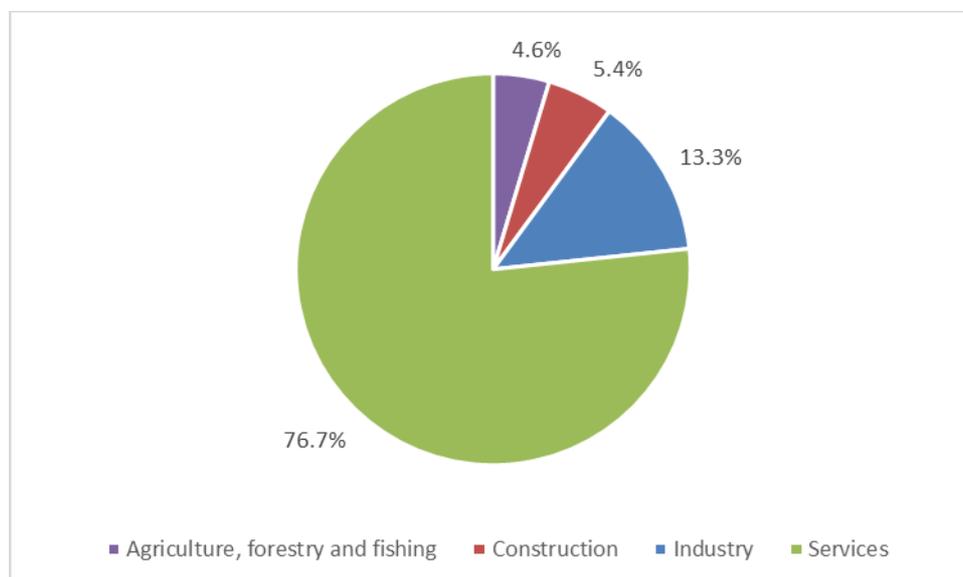
With the exception of Derry & Strabane (81.8%), Table 14 above shows how in 2020 the service sector employed a smaller percentage of people in border areas than was the case for

¹¹² Based on NISRA’s [2020 BRES Publication Tables](#) (3 August 2021), specifically Table 4: Number of Employee Jobs by District Council Area and Headline Industry, 2020, and Annex 1: Number of employee jobs in agriculture by District Council Area, June 2020.

the Northern Ireland average (81.2%), most notably the case for Mid Ulster. Here, whereas the services sector only accounted for 58.4% of employee jobs, manufacturing represented 27.3%, more than double the figure for Northern Ireland at large (11%). This sector was also more prominent in terms of the share of employee jobs in the other NUTS 3 areas within the border region, except for Derry & Strabane, where it accounted for 10.1% (no change from the previous year). Construction also continued to account for more employee jobs in all five of the NUTS 3 areas than the Northern Ireland average, with Mid Ulster having double the 4.7% average. In overall terms, agriculture was not a significant sector for employee jobs, with Fermanagh & Omagh having the highest share in this sector, at 3.8%.¹¹³

CSO's Labour Force Survey for the second quarter of 2021 includes the distribution of those aged 15 years and over in employment by business sectors, including agriculture, as set out in Chart 15.¹¹⁴

Chart 15: % of persons aged 15 years and over in employment by broad sector in the Republic of Ireland (Q2 2021)



We can see from the above chart that, as was the case in Northern Ireland, the services sector accounts for the largest share of those employed (76.7%) in the Republic of Ireland, although its dominance is not as marked as in Northern Ireland. A slightly higher percentage of people are engaged in the construction, industry, and agriculture sectors than in Northern Ireland.¹¹⁵

However, as shown in Chart 16, there are some variations from this national distribution pattern in the Border Regional Authority area.¹¹⁶

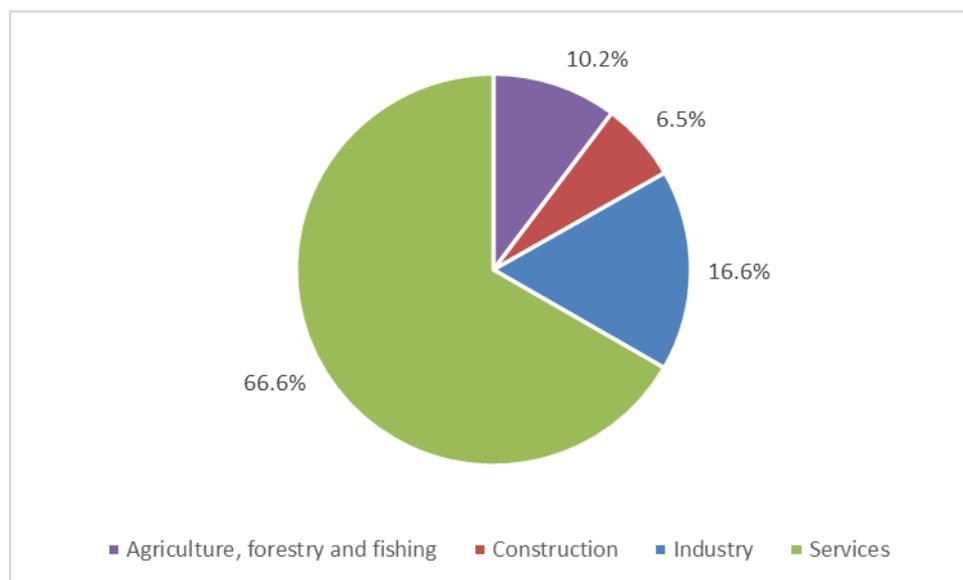
¹¹³ NISRA, "BRES 2020: Number of Employee Jobs by District Council Area and Headline Industry, 2020", in ["Business Register and Employment Survey"](#) (3 August 2021). Note that agriculture has been included in this table using data from the appendix in the BRES tables.

¹¹⁴ CSO, [Persons aged 15-89 years in Employment \(QLF07\)](#) (24 September 2021).

¹¹⁵ In the calculations we have discounted those who had not stated the sector in which they were employed.

¹¹⁶ CSO, ["Persons aged 15 years and over in Employment" \(QLF07\)](#), Labour Force Survey (24 September 2021).

Chart 16: % of persons aged 15 years and over in employment by broad sector in the Border Regional Authority Area (Q2 2021)



In the Border Regional Authority area there were approximately 10% fewer people employed in the services sector than the average, with 3% more employed in industry, and more than double (10.9%) in agriculture, forestry and fishing. This picture has changed somewhat from 2020, when 71% of people were employed in the service industry.

The Mid-East region, which includes Co. Louth, did not diverge substantially from the overall national pattern of employment distribution, with the services sector employing marginally more (77.4%), while all other industries were slightly less represented than the national average.

For a number of reasons, it is difficult to accurately gauge the opportunities for employment in the Northern Ireland-Ireland border region and how it compares with opportunities available in the respective jurisdictions. Moreover, we cannot make straightforward comparisons between the two jurisdictions. In the case of Northern Ireland, therefore, we can look at the number of job vacancies notified to Jobs & Benefits Offices of the Department for Communities (DfC) in the 2020/21 financial year, and see how many of these are available in the five NUTS 3 areas in the Northern Ireland-Ireland border region.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁷ As the Department for Communities' ["Statistical Bulletin: Employment Vacancies Notified to the Department for Communities – 2020/21 Financial Year"](#) (5 May 2021) cautions: "The statistics presented here do not relate to the total unsatisfied demand for staff by employers, but to only those vacant positions that have been notified by employers to DfC" (p.3).

Table 15: Employment vacancies to DfC (2020/2021)¹¹⁸

	Number of vacancies	Number per 1,000 of resident population	% change from previous year
Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon	6,758	30.7	-34%
Mid Ulster	3,306	21.9	-38%
Derry City and Strabane	2,678	17.7	-48%
Newry, Mourne and Down	2,233	12.1	-31%
Fermanagh and Omagh	940	7.9	-53%
Northern Ireland	45,784	24.0	-38%

The five local government districts which abut the Northern Ireland-Ireland border accounted for 35% of the total vacancies in Northern Ireland in 2020/21. As we see in Table 15, there has been a substantial decrease in the number of vacancies across all border LGDs (and indeed all 11 LGDs experienced significant reductions in advertised vacancies on 2019/20). Though the DfC cautions that “this must be viewed in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic”.¹¹⁹ Fermanagh & Omagh and Derry & Strabane both recorded sharper drops than the Northern Ireland average (-53% and -48% respectively), though Derry & Strabane had seen an increase in 2019/20 while this is the second period of reduction in a row for Fermanagh & Omagh.

Although there are no readily available data at the NUTS 3 area level, the sectors of economic activity in Northern Ireland with the highest number of notified vacancies to the DfC in 2020/21 by Standard Occupation Code (SOC) were: “Personal Service Occupations”, making up 29% (13,220) of all vacancies, down by 23% on 2019/20; “Associate Professional & Technical Occupations” (6,388, and the largest decrease of any occupation, down 53% year on year); “Elementary Occupations” (5,859, a 50% decrease); and “Process, Plant & Machine Operatives” (5,296, a 25% decrease). Indeed, all reported occupations reported a decrease in vacancies from 2019/20, with the lowest decrease being in “Managers and Senior Officials” (-18%), though they have the lowest level of overall vacancies at 3% of all notified vacancies.¹²⁰

The CSO’s estimates for the first quarter of 2021 sets the number of job vacancies in the Republic of Ireland at 17,900 (which, represents an increase from Q2 of 2020, when there were 13,700 vacancies). It also marks a halt in the trend of falling vacancies since Q2 of 2018 where they had peaked at 22,000. The sectoral distribution of these vacancies is shown in Table 16.¹²¹

¹¹⁸ NISRA, [Employment vacancies bulletin tables April 2020 to March 2021](#) (table LGD2014).

¹¹⁹ Department for Communities “[Statistical Bulletin: Employment Vacancies Notified to the Department for Communities](#)” p.8.

¹²⁰ Department for Communities, “[Statistical Bulletin: Employment Vacancies Notified to the Department for Communities – 2019/20 Financial Year](#)”, p.10.

¹²¹ CSO, Earnings and Labour Costs Quarterly Q2 2021 (prelim), table 7b: “[Job vacancies by economic sector and other characteristics and quarter](#)”.

Table 16: Number of job vacancies in the Republic of Ireland by economic sector (Q3 2020)

	Q2 2020	Q1 2021	% Change
Industry	1,000	2,100	110.0%
Construction	100	500	400.0%
Wholesale and retail trade	700	1,500	114.3%
Transportation and storage	100	300	200.0%
Accommodation and food services	1,100	700	-36.4%
Information and communication	900	1,600	77.8%
Financial, insurance and real estate	1,000	1,600	60.0%
Professional, scientific and technical	1,000	2,000	100.0%
Administrative and support services	800	700	-12.5%
Public administration and defence	3,000	3,400	13.3%
Education	2,100	1,400	-33.3%
Human health and social work	1,600	1,900	18.8%
Arts, entertainment and recreation	300	300	0.0%

Public administration and defence had the highest number of vacancies in the first quarter of 2021 (3,400, up by 13.3% on Q2 2020), followed by industry (2,100), professional, scientific, and technical activities (2,000), and Human health and social work (1,900). The sector with the biggest increase was construction, up 400% from 100 to 500 advertised vacancies, though it bears noting that vacancy searches through SOC registered vacancies cannot account for informal methods of recruitment, which will be more prevalent in areas such as construction when compared to “administrative” and “professional” occupations.

Regional and local level figures are not available through the CSO vacancy data. However, we can gain some insights through an online Irish recruitment agency’s report on vacancies for Quarter 2 of 2021. It notes how, at a national level, its ‘vacancy data reveals a 40% quarterly increase in 2021:Q2, with year-on-year vacancies showing a 157% increase when compared to the throes of the first COVID lockdown’.¹²² The report presents its data at the county level, showing year-on-year and quarterly changes in vacancies across all counties.¹²³ ‘All but two counties’, the report states, ‘have experienced a rise in vacancies over the quarter, with particularly strong increases in Wicklow (+106%) and Kilkenny (+71%)’.¹²⁴ Longford was the only county to see a year-on-year decrease (-6%), while the highest year-on-year increases were seen in Wicklow (+311%) and Dublin (200%). Table 17 focuses specifically on the data relating to the six border counties, and attests to the fact that Sligo was one of two counties in the Republic of Ireland not to see a rise in vacancies over the quarter (-3%), with the other being Limerick (-14%), therefore outside the immediate border region.

¹²² Irishjobs.ie, “Jobs Index Q2 2021” (July 2021), p.5.

¹²³ Ibid, p.13.

¹²⁴ Op. cit.

Table 17: Year-on-year and quarterly % change in number of job vacancies (Q2 2021)

Counties	Year-on-year change	Quarterly change
Cavan	64%	62%
Donegal	20%	40%
Leitrim	58%	36%
Louth	45%	39%
Monaghan	146%	64%
Sligo	44%	-3%

It is important to note, however, that the table above reflects a year-on-year comparison with a period in 2020 where the impacts of the Coronavirus pandemic were particularly intensive, with obvious consequences for the numbers of job vacancies. It is useful in the sense that it allows us to capture both the intensity of the impacts in Q2 of 2020, and the altered situation in Q2 2021. The more recent data captured by Irishjobs.ie relating to Q3 2021 is set out in Table 18, which means the year-on-year change is based on a different period in 2020 when the first wave of the pandemic had waned.¹²⁵

Table 18: Year-on-year and quarterly % change in number of job vacancies (Q3 2021)

Counties	Year-on-year change	Quarterly change
Cavan	16%	16%
Donegal	124%	85%
Leitrim	107%	8%
Louth	38%	13%
Monaghan	53%	13%
Sligo	48%	44%

This more recent data shows that all the border counties in the Republic of Ireland experienced increases in the numbers of job vacancies, both year-on-year and quarterly. Donegal saw a significant year-on-year increase (124%), and with an 85% increase was second only to Longford (170%) amongst all counties in the Republic of Ireland in terms of quarterly performance. The Irishjobs.ie report notes, however, that ‘The smallest year-on-year increase in job vacancies was recorded in Cavan (16%)’.¹²⁶

In light of the continuing impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic and the various restrictions put in place to address it, Irish employers and employees have continued to adapt to and integrate the practice of working remotely. As was the case for the same period in 2020 (and noted in our report last year), this is reflected in the Quarter 3 2021 Jobs Index, where remote working roles are up by a further 8% on the previous quarter,¹²⁷ after huge increases in remote working roles were reported in 2020 during the first waves of the pandemic.¹²⁸ However, while there has been a quarterly rise in remote working roles, Irishjobs.ie goes on to suggest that ‘compared to the large vacancy rate increases for “physically present” roles in other sectors, it suggests that employers believe the office still has an important role to play

¹²⁵ Irishjobs.ie, “[Jobs Index Q3 2021](#)”, p.13.

¹²⁶ Op. cit.

¹²⁷ Irishjobs.ie, “[Jobseekers can pick and choose as job vacancies rise](#)” (19 October 2021).

¹²⁸ Irishjobs.ie, “[Resilient Jobs Market sees 56% rise in Vacancies](#)”, (13 October 2020).

in the workplace ecosystem'.¹²⁹ Data published in July 2020 by the Office of National Statistics looking at rates of homeworking in the period April 2020 revealed that the proportion of the workforce in Northern Ireland working from home was measured at 40.9%, while the proportion for the UK as a whole was 46.6%.¹³⁰ A more recent survey by the ONS, published on 17 May 2021, and which looks at the wider period of January to December 2020, reports 18% of the Northern Ireland workforce as having worked at home in the week prior to interview.¹³¹ This could be indicative of a similar belief of employers in Northern Ireland that, like their counterparts in the Republic of Ireland, there is still a need for “physically present” roles in the workforce.

At the time of writing, the latest figures available for Northern Ireland as a whole relating to those availing of the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme up to 31 August 2021 were 30,100 (provisionally dropping to 26,300 by the end of September).¹³² In last year’s report the figure was 54,100 for the end of November 2020. As was the case in last year’s report, Newry, Mourne and Down has the highest take up rate at 5% as of 31 August 2021 (representing 3,400 employments on furlough out of a total of 66,500 employments eligible for furlough), although with an estimated take up rate of 4% for 30 September 2021. Of the other Northern Ireland Local Government Districts located in the border region, Derry & Strabane had the lowest take up rate in Northern Ireland at 3% as of 31 August 2021, while the others had take up rates of 4%, which was the rate for all the remaining Local Government Districts.

According to the CSO in the publication of the monthly unemployment rates for October 2021, ‘the COVID-19 crisis has continued to have a significant impact on the labour market in Ireland’.¹³³ The CSO reports that ‘While the standard measure of Monthly Unemployment was 5.2% in October 2021, the COVID-19 Adjusted Measure of Unemployment could indicate a rate as high as 7.9% if all claimants of the Pandemic Unemployment Payment (PUP) were classified as unemployed’. This means that there were 127,440 people unemployed (aged 15 to 74) in October 2021 using the standard measure of monthly unemployment (a 4.9% rate, seasonally unadjusted), but 205,246 unemployed using the Covid-19 Adjusted Measure. The equivalent figures for October 2020 were 144,644 unemployed using the standard measure of monthly unemployment (a rate of 6%), and 490,349 unemployed using the Covid-19 Adjusted Measure (a rate of 20.3%). It should be noted that the PUP was closed to new applicants from 8 July 2021. Additionally, the Temporary Wage Subsidy Scheme in the Republic of Ireland was replaced by the Employment Wage Subsidy Scheme in at the end of August 2020, which the CSO has estimated has supported 326,888 people between July 2020 and March 2021.¹³⁴

In order to gain a better picture of the presence of Covid-19 supports provided by the governments in both jurisdictions on the island of Ireland in the Northern Ireland-Ireland

¹²⁹ Ibid.

¹³⁰ ONS, [“Homeworking patterns in the UK, broken down by sex, age, region and ethnicity”](#), (8 July 2020).

¹³¹ ONS, [“Homeworking in the UK labour market”](#) (17 May 2021).

¹³² HMRC, [“Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme statistics: November 2021” \(table 5\)](#), (9 September 2021).

¹³³ CSO, [“Monthly Unemployment October 2021”](#), (3 November 2021).

¹³⁴ CSO, [COVID-19 Income Supports - An Analysis of Recipients March 2020 to May 2021](#).

border region we can look to figures relating to the end of September and October 2021. The table below details those in receipt of the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme in Northern Ireland by local government district (LGD).¹³⁵

Table 19: CJRS Furloughed employment by Local Authority (provisional ONS estimates for 30 September 2021)

Sept 21	Total Furloughed	Eligible	Take Up %
Northern Ireland	26,300	746,300	4%
Antrim and Newtownabbey	2,000	61,300	3%
Ards and North Down	2,100	61,300	3%
Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon	3,600	89,200	4%
Belfast	4,600	137,900	3%
Causeway Coast and Glens	1,800	50,200	4%
Derry City and Strabane	1,700	56,500	3%
Fermanagh and Omagh	1,500	42,900	4%
Lisburn and Castlereagh	2,100	62,500	3%
Mid and East Antrim	2,000	56,300	3%
Mid Ulster	2,100	61,600	3%
Newry, Mourne and Down	2,900	66,500	4%

The first thing to note is that, for Northern Ireland as a whole, there has been a reduction from a 32% take up in July of 2020 down to a provisional estimate of 4% for 30 September 2021, with no LGD expected to exceed this level. Newry, Down & Mourne, Fermanagh & Omagh, and Armagh, Banbridge, and Craigavon are all predicated to have a 4% take up by 30 September 2021, with Derry & Strabane and Mid Ulster to have a 3% rate of take up. All of these are a substantial drop of ~30 percentage points over the last year.

Unlike the PUP scheme available in the Republic of Ireland, the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme is not available to those who are self-employed in Northern Ireland. These workers can avail of the UK Government's Self-Employment Income Support Scheme (SEISS) instead. The table below relates to individuals claiming the SEISS grant up to 7 October 2021.¹³⁶

¹³⁵ HMRC, "[Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme statistics: November 2021](#)" (table 12), (4 November 2021).

¹³⁶ HMRC, "[Self-Employment Income Support Scheme statistics: November 2021](#)" (table 5), (4 November 2021). The figures are based on claims submitted for the fifth grant by 7 October 2021.

Table 20: SEISS claims to 7 October 2021 by Local Authority

Oct 21	Eligible	Claims	Take Up
Northern Ireland	95,000	31,000	32%
Antrim and Newtownabbey	5,800	2,000	34%
Ards and North Down	7,500	2,400	32%
Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon	11,300	3,300	29%
Belfast	11,100	5,100	46%
Causeway Coast and Glens	9,400	2,800	30%
Derry City and Strabane	7,500	2,600	34%
Fermanagh and Omagh	7,800	1,900	24%
Lisburn and Castlereagh	6,200	2,100	34%
Mid and East Antrim	6,600	1,800	28%
Mid Ulster	9,900	2,800	28%
Newry, Mourne and Down	12,000	3,800	31%

As with the furlough scheme, there has been a considerable fall in the proportion of claims made for the SEISS over the last year, from 81% of eligible claimants in July 2020, to 32% in October 2021. Derry & Strabane was the only area above this level (34%) with all other LGDs in the border region below, and Fermanagh & Omagh recording the lowest level of claims at 24% of its eligible population (the lowest in the whole of Northern Ireland).

The next Table details the number of people who had been in receipt of PUP and EWSS (the replacement of the TWSS from September 2020) in the border counties in the Republic of Ireland.¹³⁷ While there are two separate sets of data available for those employed and self-employed in Northern Ireland, self-employed workers affected by the pandemic in the Republic of Ireland can avail of the PUP scheme in their jurisdiction.

¹³⁷ CSO, "[LRW14: Number of Persons on the Live Register, in receipt of the PUP and supported by the TWSS or EWSS](#)" (8 November 2021). The figures for people in receipt of PUP and EWSS are as of 29 August 2021, which is the most recent date for figures relating to EWSS. There are more recent figures for people in receipt of PUP, which show as of 31 October 2021 there were 77,806 people across the Republic of Ireland in receipt of this payment, 2,382 in Louth, 400 in Leitrim, 764 in Sligo, 972 in Cavan, 2,118 in Donegal, and 968 in Monaghan.

Table 21: Total number of PUP & EWSS Claims by border county (31 October 2021)

	PUP	EWSS	Total
Republic of Ireland	143,605	293,645	437,250
Louth	4,252	7,357	11,609
Leitrim	784	1,606	2,390
Sligo	1,614	3,600	5,214
Cavan	1,821	3,591	5,412
Donegal	4,216	9,895	14,111
Monaghan	1,774	2,898	4,672

County Donegal (14,111) had the highest number of people in receipt of Covid support payments, followed by County Louth (11,609), Cavan (5,412) and Sligo (5,214). Leitrim had the smallest number of people receiving support from the schemes (1,606).

Based on the above information, which has been taken from the relevant CSO and ONS sources, we can gain a sense of the number of those in receipt of Covid-19 support payments from their respective jurisdictions in the Northern Ireland-Ireland border region in a period spanning the end of August to early October 2021, where it stood at 69,808 people.¹³⁸ In the five Northern Ireland local government districts which abut the border, 11,800 workers were part of the furlough payment scheme as of 30 September 2021, while 14,400 self-employed workers had submitted claims to the SEISS scheme by 7 October 2021, a total of 47% of all claimants in Northern Ireland. In the border counties in the Republic of Ireland, 43,408 were in receipt of either PUP or EWSS by 29 August 2021, or 10% of all Covid supports. Payments to those in the Northern Ireland-Ireland border region accounted for 14% of all payments on the island of Ireland in the period late August to early October.

Cross-border mobility in the Northern Ireland-Ireland border region

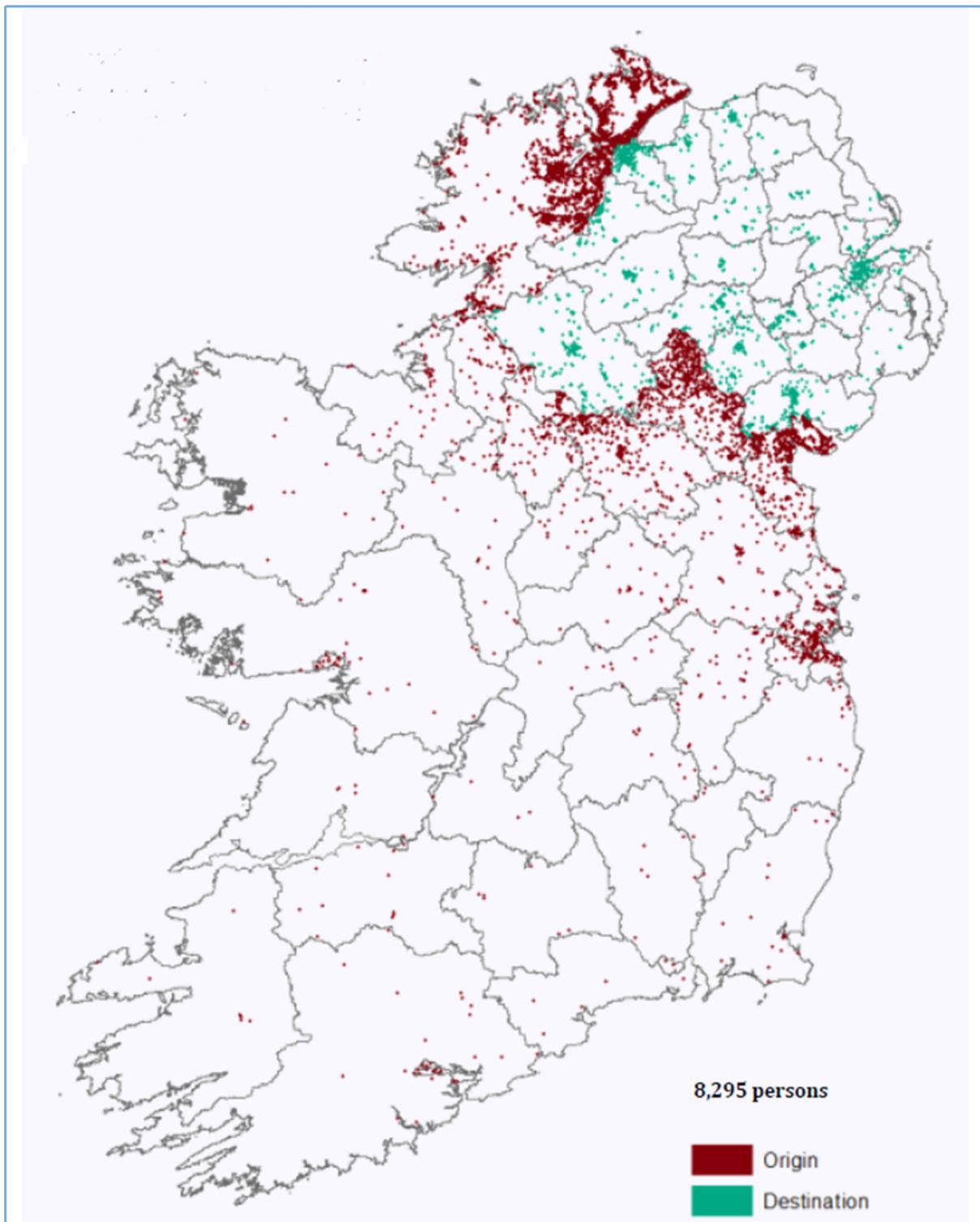
Although, as noted earlier, there is mobility of the two populations between the two jurisdictions on the island of Ireland for a variety of purposes, and not restricted to those living within the Northern Ireland-Ireland border region, our focus here will be on the border region and on issues of mobility with relevance to the labour market. In their joint report of 2014, the CSO and NISRA noted that the “majority of those [from Ireland] who commuted to Northern Ireland were resident in the border areas of Donegal, Cavan, Monaghan and Louth”, and while the residence of those commuting in the opposite direction “was more widely

¹³⁸ It is important to note that this figure is only aimed at giving a general sense as to the numbers across the Northern Ireland-Ireland border region. It is based on different figures taken at different points in the period from end of August to early October.

spread across Northern Ireland”, “much of the activity is in border areas”. However, bearing in mind that cross-border commuting for the purpose of education is included in this data, it is worth noting how the destinations of these cross-border commuters is not restricted to the Northern Ireland-Ireland border region, as the same report points out. In respect of commuters from Ireland, “Their destinations [...] were mainly concentrated in the Belfast and Derry LGDs, with further clusters in Newry, Armagh, Craigavon, Dungannon, Enniskillen, Omagh, Limavady, Strabane and Coleraine”. The destination of those commuting from Northern Ireland “is concentrated in Dublin, with further clusters in the towns of Letterkenny, Drogheda, Dundalk, Cavan and Monaghan”.¹³⁹ It is worthwhile reproducing here two maps included in the CSO and NISRA report to better illustrate the geography of these flows of cross-border commuters, bearing in mind, of course, that more recently the strength of these flows will have been affected by the Coronavirus pandemic.

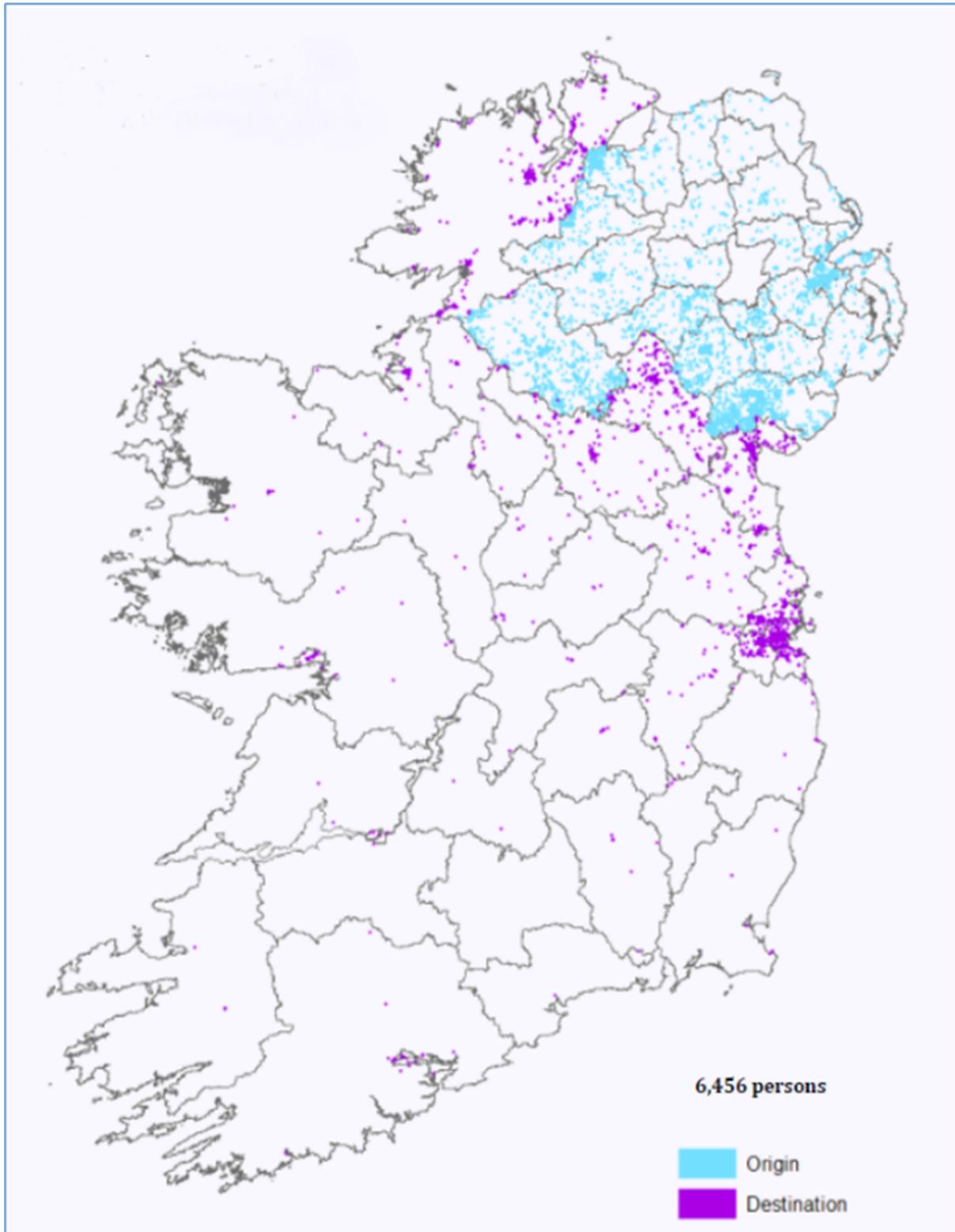
¹³⁹ CSO and NISRA, [“Census 2011: Ireland and Northern Ireland”](#) (June 2014), p.60.

Map 6: Origin and destination of cross-border commuters from Ireland to work or study in Northern Ireland.



[Census 2011: Ireland and Northern Ireland](#), p.61.

Map 7: Origin and destination of cross-border commuter from Northern Ireland to work or study in Ireland.



[“Census 2011: Ireland and Northern Ireland”](#), p.62.

A more recent report by Northern Ireland's Department for the Economy suggested that "commuter patterns indicate 'hotspots' between Derry-Londonderry and Donegal and between Newry and Dundalk (located on the Dublin-Belfast axis)", and that "Other noteworthy interactions include Cavan and Enniskillen, Lifford and Strabane and Monaghan and Armagh".¹⁴⁰ It also reflected on engagement it undertook with stakeholders in the North West of the island of Ireland, which "highlighted the importance of cross border workers", and how "over the past 10-15 years there has been a large number of people from Derry-Londonderry who have moved to live in the towns and villages in Donegal in close proximity to the border while continuing to work in [Northern Ireland]" (p.19).

In its analysis of data provided by the 2016 Census, the CSO reports:

"Census 2016 recorded 9,336 people who crossed the border for work and school, a decrease of 2.1% on the 2011 figure of 9,536. Workers made up three quarters, 7,037 of commuters, up 10%, while students accounted for the remainder (2,299 down 26%). Donegal accounted for the largest number of cross border commuters, with 5,600 commuters, 76 per cent of whom travelled to Co. Derry".¹⁴¹

Two points arise from these figures. First, the fact that whilst overall cross-border commuting witnessed a decline in terms of the numbers travelling from Ireland to Northern Ireland, those doing so for reasons of work actually increased. The second point is the fact that, as noted earlier in our present report, census figures will not include self-employed workers, such as freight drivers and builders, who work on both sides of the border but do not have a permanent place of work. The figures are also likely to exclude people such as those working in sales or construction who work mainly from home but may have to cross the border regularly for work reasons. Nevertheless, using the data from the 2016 Census, Table 21 shows the counties of origin (left-hand column) and destination of people travelling from Ireland to Northern Ireland to work.

¹⁴⁰ Department for the Economy, "[Background Evidence on the Movement of People across the Northern Ireland-Ireland Border](#)" (March 2018), p.6.

¹⁴¹ CSO, "[Cross Border Commuters 2016](#)", p.2.

Table 22: Persons aged 15 years and over usually resident in Ireland by county of place of work in Northern Ireland and county of usual residence (2016)

County	Antrim	Armagh	Derry	Down	Fermanagh	Tyrone	Total
Carlow	0	1	2	1	1	1	6
Dublin City	62	18	11	36	2	16	145
Dun Laoghaire-Rathdown	35	6	1	11	0	3	56
Fingal	38	16	10	20	2	12	98
South Dublin	28	4	2	14	1	6	55
Kildare	19	13	4	10	4	5	55
Kilkenny	8	1	1	1	1	1	13
Laois	4	3	0	3	5	4	19
Longford	3	0	1	0	6	2	12
Louth	99	326	7	277	2	20	731
Meath	29	23	6	33	6	6	103
Offaly	7	3	2	1	2	3	18
Westmeath	12	4	2	4	2	3	27
Wexford	7	0	0	3	0	1	11
Wicklow	11	6	2	8	2	6	35
Clare	6	3	2	2	1	2	16
Cork City	4	1	0	2	0	2	9
Cork County	22	5	3	5	2	2	39
Kerry	4	2	3	4	0	1	14
Limerick City and County	7	3	0	2	2	0	14
Tipperary	9	2	0	4	1	6	22
Waterford City and County	2	1	1	2	1	2	9
Galway City	6	0	3	1	0	0	10
Galway County	12	1	6	9	2	2	32
Leitrim	4	3	3	1	106	17	134
Mayo	5	2	4	4	3	7	25
Roscommon	10	1	3	4	8	1	27
Sligo	5	4	0	1	16	2	28
Cavan	12	31	7	12	353	22	437
Donegal	191	20	2965	29	109	612	3926
Monaghan	68	428	13	81	134	187	911
Ireland	729	931	3064	585	774	954	7037

The figures underline Donegal and Derry's position as the prime sites of cross-border mobility for reasons of employment for those residing in the Republic of Ireland. While according to the 2016 census 3,926 people from Donegal crossed the border to work in Northern Ireland, Derry was the recipient of 3,064 cross-border workers from Ireland. Four of the six Irish counties within the Northern Ireland-Ireland border region occupied the top four positions in terms of numbers of their respective populations travelling across the border to work, with Dublin City placed fifth (with 145), ahead of Co. Leitrim in sixth (with 134). According to the census, only 28 residents from Co. Sligo crossed the border to work in Northern Ireland.¹⁴²

There is no equivalent 2016 census data for Northern Ireland, although a September 2018 Research Bulletin by Northern Ireland's Department for the Economy on "[The movement of people across the Northern Ireland-Republic of Ireland border](#)" provides some insights using data from mobile phones. It estimated that Northern Ireland residents make 60,804,000 border crossings per year, and that the majority of them (using the old 26 Local Government Districts) originated in Derry (35.6%), Fermanagh (14.6%), Newry and Mourne (14%), Strabane (7.9%), and Dungannon and Armagh (both at 6.6%). "It was found", the report states, "that 88% of crossings by [Northern Ireland] residents started in border LGDs" (p.6). Although the use of mobile data did not allow to ascertain the ultimate destination of Northern Ireland residents crossing the border, the report estimated that on average 35% of border crossings by Northern Ireland residents are work related.

In the absence of more recent data, the table below returns to the 2011 census for Northern Ireland to gain some understanding of where Northern Ireland residents working in the Republic of Ireland were coming from.¹⁴³

Table 23: Northern Ireland residents (aged 16-74, excluding students) working in the Republic of Ireland (2011)

Antrim & Newtownabbey	74
Ards & North Down	76
Armagh, Banbridge & Craigavon	712
Belfast	238
Causeway Coast & Glens	133
Derry & Strabane	1,228
Fermanagh & Omagh	1,294
Lisburn & Castlereagh	140
Mid & East Antrim	70
Mid Ulster	356
Newry, Mourne & Down	1,749
Northern Ireland	6,070

According to the 2011 Census, the five Northern Ireland NUTS 3 areas abutting the border occupy the top five positions in terms of numbers of their residents working in the Republic

¹⁴² CSO, "[E6045: Population Aged 15 Years and Over at Work, Usually Resident and Present in the State 2011 to 2016 by County of Place of Work, County of Usual Residence and Census Year](#)".

¹⁴³ The data employed here is extracted from [Census 2011](#), "Location of Usual Residence by Place of Work in Republic of Ireland (ROI): CT0354NI".

of Ireland, with Belfast coming sixth. Newry, Mourne & Down had the highest number (1,749), followed by Fermanagh & Omagh (1,294) and Derry & Strabane (1,228).

The following table sets out the counties in the Republic of Ireland where residents from the five Northern Ireland NUTS 3 areas in the Northern Ireland-Ireland border region work.

Table 24: Distribution of residents of 5 Northern Ireland NUTS 3 areas according to their place of work in the Republic of Ireland (2011)

	Armagh, Banbridge & Craigavon	Derry & Strabane	Fermanagh & Omagh	Mid Ulster	Newry, Mourne & Down	Total
Dublin City	75	21	48	37	218	399
South Dublin	13	7	7	5	38	70
Fingal	39	5	18	9	82	153
Dun Laoghaire- Rathdown	17	4	10	11	32	74
Kildare	3	8	6	8	17	42
Louth	124	6	13	18	747	908
Meath	16	1	4	8	53	82
Leitrim	0	0	59	2	2	63
Sligo	1	2	65	2	0	70
Cavan	22	3	345	12	7	389
Donegal	7	855	199	11	8	1,080
Monaghan	233	6	243	119	107	708
Other*	162	310	277	114	438	1,301

* Respondents did not specify where they worked in the Republic of Ireland.

According to the data from the 2011 census, the five counties or cities in Ireland that attract the most residents in the five Northern Ireland NUTS 3 areas in the border region to cross the border to work are: Donegal (1,080), Louth (908), Monaghan (708), Dublin City (399), and Cavan (389). For those travelling from Belfast to work in Ireland, Dublin city was the top destination, followed by Co. Louth and Dun Laoghaire-Rathdown.

The 2014 joint report by the CSO and NISRA analysing the data from the 2011 censuses in the two jurisdictions noted that in terms of employment, “the most important industry for cross-border commuters was wholesale and retail, accounting for 16 per cent of persons travelling to Ireland from Northern Ireland and 14 per cent commuting in the opposite direction” (p.64). It also highlights the importance of education and health services, which together accounted for 28 per cent of those commuting from Ireland to Northern Ireland, and 22 per cent of those commuting in the opposite direction. However, the report does not comment on the fact that approximately 14% of those commuting from Ireland to Northern Ireland and 12.5% of those commuting in the opposite direction did so to work in the manufacturing (including mining) sector.

In terms of the occupations of those crossing the border to work, the same report states:

“Cross-border commuters were proportionally more likely than the general population to be working in managerial and professional roles. Together, managers, directors and professionals accounted for 44 per cent of workers in Ireland from Northern Ireland, and 38 per cent of those from Ireland commuting to work in Northern Ireland. Given the importance of the health and education industries for cross-border commuters, it is unsurprising that the professional occupations group was the most important category for both sets of workers” (p.64).

However, it also noted how, “in general, a higher percentage of those travelling to Ireland from Northern Ireland to work could be found in managerial and professional roles, while among those commuting to Northern Ireland from Ireland there was a greater number in occupational groups requiring lower skill levels, including operatives and elementary trades” (p.64).

The Results

Based on the relevant data available, a number of conclusions highlighted in our report in 2020 continue to hold validity, beginning with the focal points of cross-border labour mobility in the Northern Ireland-Ireland border region, as well as the characteristics relating to the labour market environment in the Northern Ireland-Ireland border region. These include:

- The cross-border route between Derry & Strabane and Co. Donegal is the most intensive for the mobility of labour, with the flow being stronger in numerical terms from Donegal to Derry & Strabane.
- All of the LGDs/NUTS 3 areas in Northern Ireland within the border region are the most significant sites in terms of cross-border labour mobility from Northern Ireland to the Republic of Ireland (North to South).
- Four of the six Irish counties within the Northern Ireland-Ireland border region are important points of origin for cross-border labour mobility into Northern Ireland (South to North), with significant numbers of workers undertaking this type of mobility: Donegal, Monaghan, Louth and Cavan.
- All of the five LGDs/NUTS 3 areas in Northern Ireland within the border region are important destinations for cross-border labour mobility from the Republic of Ireland (South to North).
- Sligo and Leitrim appear to be of lesser significance as destinations for cross-border labour mobility from Northern Ireland (North to South), with other counties outside the Northern Ireland-Ireland border region holding greater relative importance, especially along the Belfast-Dublin corridor.
- Northern Ireland's older population continues to increase (with a rate of growth in the year to mid-2020 of 1.7% of those aged 65 and over), and it is predicted that it will outnumber those aged 0-15 by 2028. However, both in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland, the percentage of the population aged 65 and over in 2020 (16.9% in Northern Ireland and 14.5% in the Republic of Ireland) is still below the UK and EU averages (18.6% and 20.6% respectively).
- The population in the Northern Ireland-Ireland border region continues to grow at a steady rate with a higher percentage of younger people than the respective jurisdictions. Based on these figures, the region will have a proportionally significant growth in those entering the potential labour force. However, the region also has a higher proportion of people aged 65 and over than is the case for either jurisdiction as a whole.
- The Republic of Ireland continues to have a larger portion of the population achieving a higher level of education than Northern Ireland. As stated elsewhere in this report, lack of qualified personnel and lack of skills are two of the main drivers for recruitment of a cross-border basis.

- With the exception of Newry, Mourne, and Down, the Border region has a lower level of educational attainment than the respective jurisdictions although this is continuing to show signs of improvement, except in Derry & Strabane which has seen a fall in those with educational attainment at Level 4 and above.
- More than half (52.7%) of all registered businesses in Northern Ireland in 2021 are located in the five LGDs/NUTS 3 areas that form part of the Northern Ireland-Ireland border region. It is estimated that in 2019 the Northern Ireland-Ireland border region accounted for almost a fifth (19.1%) of all active enterprises on the island of Ireland.
- As is the case for the island of Ireland as a whole, businesses employing fewer than ten people continue to dominate the business landscape in the Northern Ireland-Ireland border region, although with some isolated but significant instances of businesses in the larger employment size bands.
- In 2021 71% of all businesses in the agriculture, forestry and fishing sector in Northern Ireland were located within the five NUTS 3 areas adjoining the border (up 0.2% from 2020), which also contained 59.6% of all construction businesses (up 0.5%), 47.3% of all transport and storage businesses (down 4.3%), 55.5% of all production businesses (up 0.4%), and 48.8% of all retail businesses (down 0.1%). In contrast, the same areas only contained 26.9% of all information and communication businesses (down 0.2%), and 37.2% of all professional, scientific and technical businesses (up 0.5%).
- In terms of employment, the services sector employs the largest numbers of people in the Northern Ireland-Ireland border region, as is the case for the island of Ireland as a whole. However, a higher percentage of people continued to be employed in manufacturing and construction in the border region than elsewhere.
- Employment rates in Newry Mourne and Down, Mid Ulster, and Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon over-performed the overall Northern Ireland level in 2019 while Derry and Strabane and Fermanagh and Omagh were below.
- 2/5 border LGDs saw an increase in the employment rate with Fermanagh and Omagh increasing by 2.2 points and Newry, Mourne and Down increasing 1.2%. The employment rate in Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon remained static between 2019 and 2020, while it fell in Mid Ulster and Derry City and Strabane.
- The five Northern Ireland LGDs which abut the Northern Ireland-Ireland border accounted for 35% of the total vacancies in Northern Ireland in 2020/21. There was a substantial decrease in the number of vacancies across all border LGDs, although this must be seen in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic. Fermanagh & Omagh and Derry & Strabane both recorded sharper drops than the Northern Ireland average (-53% and -48% respectively).
- The pandemic has meant remote working has continued to feature as an important practice, although the rate of increase in remote working roles has appeared to slow down considerably in comparison to what was the case in 2020. Irishjobs.ie reported

an 8% quarterly increase in remote working roles in Q3 2021, while ONS data for the period January to December 2020 shows 18% of the Northern Ireland workforce having worked from home in the week prior to interview.

- The Border Regional Authority had the lowest ILO Participation rate (59.7%) for Quarter 2 of 2021, but recorded a significant increase on Q2 2020 of 9.2%. However, it continues to fall below the national participation rate of 63.1%. The Mid-East region, which contains Co. Louth, has also experienced an increase of 5% in ILO participation from Quarter 2 in 2020, from 57.2% to 62.2%.
- The estimate of those in receipt of Covid-19 support payments in the Northern Ireland-Ireland border region from their respective jurisdictions in a period spanning the end of August to early October 2021, is 69,808 people. In the five Northern Ireland local government districts which abut the border, 11,800 workers were part of the furlough payment scheme as of 30 September 2021, while 14,400 self-employed workers had submitted claims to the SEISS scheme by 7 October 2021, a total of 47% of all claimants in Northern Ireland. In the border counties in the Republic of Ireland, 43,408 were in receipt of either PUP or EWSS by 29 August 2021, or 10% of all Covid supports. Payments to those in the Northern Ireland-Ireland border region accounted for 14% of all payments on the island of Ireland in the period late August to early October.
- The Claimant Count for Northern Ireland has recorded a year-on-year decrease of 1.2% in November 2020, from 6% in October 2020 to 4.8% in October 2021.

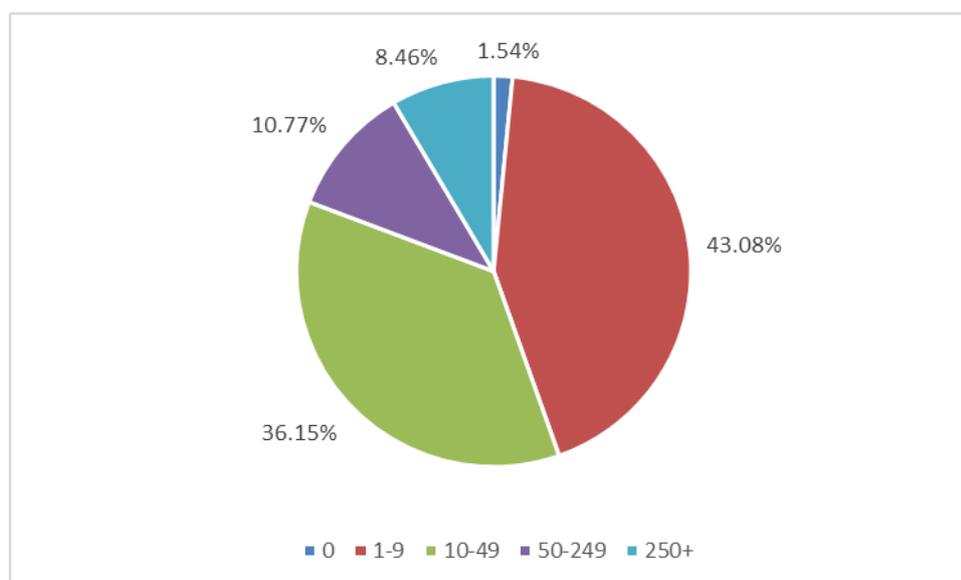
Survey of cross-border employers and results

The EURES Ireland-Northern Ireland Cross Border Partnership and the Chambers of Commerce in the Northern Ireland-Ireland border region conducted a survey of employers in September 2021. The overarching purpose of the survey was to measure the number and nature of cross-border employees. The survey was issued to a number of businesses, the majority of which were based in the border region and their responses recorded. Businesses were asked a series of questions (which can be seen in the Appendix) regarding their profile and their involvement with cross-border workers. Despite the challenges posed by the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic, the survey gathered data from 130 respondents.

Profile of respondents

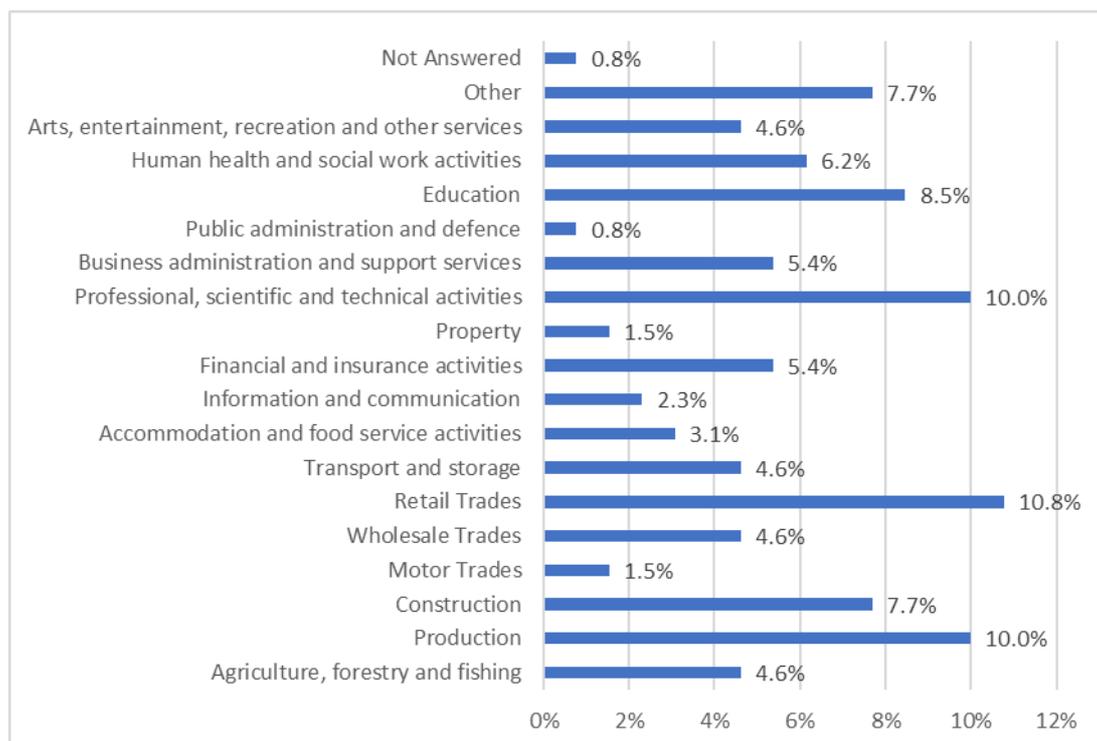
The majority of respondents to the EURES survey were businesses employing less than 49 people, making up 80% of the firms. 43% of businesses employ between 1-9 workers, while 36% of firms employed 10-49 workers. Only 19.2% of businesses responding to the survey employed 50 people or more. This suggests that, while the businesses responding to the survey are broadly reflective of the overall business landscape in the Northern Ireland-Ireland border region in terms of the sizes of businesses by the number of employees, there is a higher proportion of larger business in the responses.

Chart 17: Profile of businesses responding to survey (%)



The nature of the main economic activity of the businesses that responded to the survey was wide ranging, as can be seen in Chart 18 below, but with the highest percentage of participating firms coming from the production sector (10%). The representation of businesses from these sectors, as well as 7.7% respondents to the EURES survey coming from the construction sector, is generally in line with the overall economic profile of the Northern Ireland-Ireland border region suggested by the data analysed earlier in this report.

Chart 18: Nature of the main economic activity of the businesses (%)

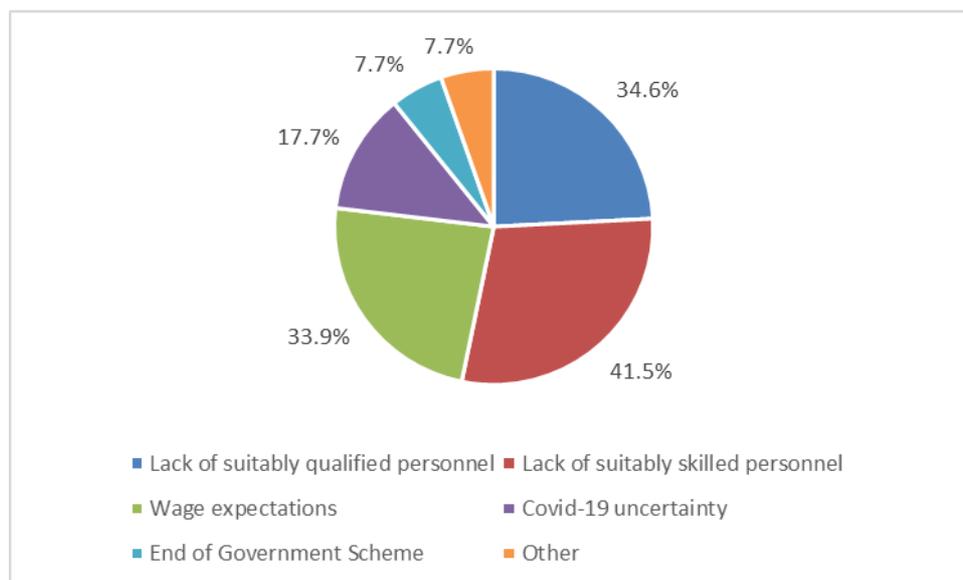


As the chart shows, 10.8% of respondents to the survey were from businesses involved in retail and 10% in each of production, and professional, scientific, and technical activities. Of note is that professional, scientific, and technical activities are relatively high among respondents compared to the businesses in the border region, while only 4.6% of respondents are based in agriculture, forestry, and fishing, the sector which dominates the border region. The “Other” category, which 7.7% of respondents also selected, included businesses who described their activities as being Manufacturing, Waste and Recycling, and Dentistry.

The vast majority (94.6%) of the organisations who responded to the EURES survey were located in counties that adjoin the Northern Ireland-Ireland border region, with only a small number of isolated cases of respondents describing themselves as based outside the region. Within the border region, the majority of responses came from Co. Derry/Londonderry, with 39.32%. Next was Co. Tyrone which accounted for 19.2%, followed by Armagh with 17.7% and Co. Louth with 11.5%.

Staff Recruitment

In assessing the barriers that these businesses face in recruiting workers, the survey identified common obstacles across a range of businesses from different sectors. While 36 respondents reported that they were currently not in need of any staff, 41.5% of those who did cited a lack of suitably skilled personnel, and 34.6% reported a lack of suitably qualified personnel, while 33% cited wage expectations as a barrier to recruitment. With regard to the pandemic, 25% respondents raised the issue of either uncertainty due to Covid-19 (17.7%), or the end of government schemes related to Covid (7.7%).

Chart 19: Barriers to general recruitment (%)¹⁴⁴

It should be noted that among those respondents who opted for “Other” barriers (7.7%), lack of applicants was identified as the most significant barrier to recruitment (36%), followed by the requirement for workers with a specific skills profile (21%), and a lack of migrant workers (14%).

Some of these respondents offered the following comments:

“As we emerge from Covid companies are more actively recruiting. Becoming more difficult to attract good people as they now have many more options”.

“I need a young electronic engineer with a driving licence”.

“Drivers must be professionally qualified: Driver CPC, and very few are”.

“Staff previously employed unwilling to come back into sector”.

“Lack of Foreign Nationals into the country at living wage level”.

Cross Border Workers and Recruitment

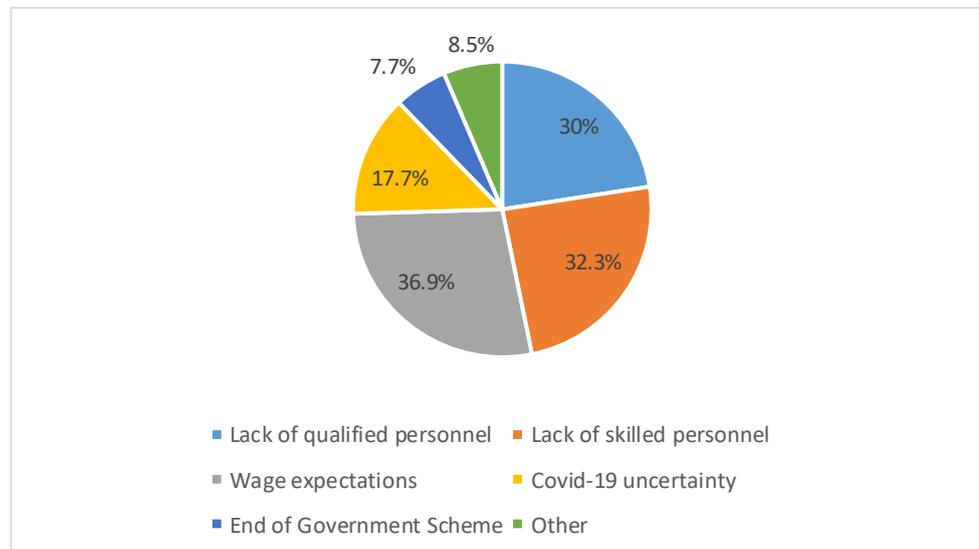
Of the businesses responding to the survey, 53.1% stated that they employ staff who are normally resident on the other side of the border, with the vast majority of these employers (81.3%) employing less than 10 cross border workers, which is reflective of the overall business landscape on the island of Ireland. However, respondents to the survey who indicated they employed staff who crossed the border to work also reflect the fact that the Northern Ireland-Ireland border region contains significant areas where the percentage of larger businesses is higher than the overall figure for the two jurisdictions. Thus, 13.3% of

¹⁴⁴ It should be noted that this chart does not include responses that indicated “No need for staff currently”, which 27.7% of respondents identified as a factor.

respondents were from businesses employing between 10 and 49 people, making these not just major employers in the region, but major employers of cross-border workers.

Chart 20 details the biggest barriers to cross border recruitment identified by respondents to the survey.

Chart 20: Barriers to cross border recruitment (%)¹⁴⁵



There were 8.5% of respondents who identified “Other” factors as barriers to cross border recruitment; of these, 27% named the following specific barriers: stipulations with cross border tax arrangements; logistics deterring cross border workers from applying; and Brexit concerns. 18% also cited a lack of appropriate positions or cross border applicants.

In terms of those citing differences in cross border tax regulations as a barrier, some of the following comments were made:

- *“Complicated tax status allowing hybrid working for cross boarder working”.*
- *“Dual tax labilities”.*
- *“Ridiculous & unjust tax situation for home-working cross border workers based in the Rol. Needs to be addressed as a very urgent priority”.*

Comments offered by some of those citing logistical barriers included:

- *“Travel and unsociable hours”.*
- *“Distance from border to client sites”.*
- *“Cannot get CTC clearance for security roles”.*

As for the respondents who identified Brexit as a barrier, the following are some of the comments offered:

- *“Lack of clarity on post Brexit cross border employment rules”.*

¹⁴⁵ It should be noted that this chart does not include responses that indicated “No need for staff currently”, which 31.5% of respondents identified as a factor.

- *“Concerns re: effect of Brexit”.*

In focussing on the barriers to employing cross border workers, the survey is broadly reflective of the island at large. While 41 respondents (31.5%) reported that they were currently not in need of any staff, 32.3% of responses indicated a lack of skilled personnel, while 30% cited a lack of qualified personnel. With regard to the pandemic, 25.4% of responses raised the issue of either uncertainty do to Covid-19 (17.7%) or the end of government schemes related to Covid (7.7%). However, it should be noted that in last year’s survey 37.5% of responses identified Covid-19 uncertainties as a barrier to cross border recruitment. Wage expectations were seen as the most significant barrier, with 36.7% of responses identifying this as a factor. Wage expectations as a barrier to cross border recruitment has been seen as a common issue for cross border employers, identified in the 2019 report for the European Parliament on [“Employment barriers in border regions”](#).

Lack of skills and lack of qualified personnel available to employers remains a constant and important issue for employers. These issues could be addressed by harnessing one of the key benefits of recruiting across borders – access to a wider pool of suitably skilled and qualified potential candidates.

Businesses response to Covid-19

The Covid-19 pandemic and the relating public health restrictions which have been introduced by governments in the respective jurisdictions on the island of Ireland have continued to have a significant impact on businesses, not just in the Northern Ireland-Ireland border region, but across the island. Of the businesses responding to the EURES survey, 79.2% have said the pandemic has affected their business, though only 9.2% anticipate having to make staff redundant in the next 12 months as a result of the pandemic (this is significantly down from 31.3% of responses to the 2020 EURES survey).

Among the 89 respondents who provided information on pandemic working locations, 61.8% said their cross border employees worked either from home (15.7%) or a combination of home and usual place of work (46.1%) during the pandemic, with 38.2% working at the usual place of work. 27% of those who provided responses to the question “Was there a change in location of workers due to the pandemic” indicated that there had been a change in location. An analysis of the comments supplied by respondents reveals the following:

The majority of businesses (61%) saw some staff members working from home at some point:

- *“Rotated staff timetables”.*
- *“Those working from home enabled others to be on site while preserving social distancing”.*
- *“All worked from home”.*
- *“Most of the staff moved to work from home- all NI residents were required to work in the office”.*

13% of businesses felt that having staff working from home made it harder to coordinate business activities:

- *“Having people working from home made it difficult to co-ordinate activity”.*
- *“Some extra expense incurred getting staff set up from home. Challenges in team work as we weren't all in the office at the same time”.*
- *“New learning and discipline approach”.*

79.2% of respondents to this EURES survey said their business had been affected by the Covid-19 pandemic, with 19.2% saying it had not (1.5% did not answer this question). The table below sets out the principal types of impacts respondents identified, with some responses indicating more than one of these impacts.

Table 25: Impact of Covid-19 on business

Response Category	Frequency of responses	%
Loss of business/ income	36	33%
Normal business activities curtailed/ altered	25	23%
Staff shortage and absences due to Covid	13	12%
Increased workload/ costs	12	11%
Recruitment pressures	10	9%
Employees furloughed	6	6%
Staff worked/ working from home	3	3%
Other	4	4%

The most commonly cited impact of Covid on business was loss of business/ income (with a third of respondents citing this):

- *“Massive overhaul of the business; down 50%, resulting in lay-offs etc.”*
- *“The pandemic has slowed down sales of our technology to companies as they have reassessed budgets as a precaution in light of the pandemic.”*
- *“Close contact, working on people's faces, fear of contracting the virus, fear of spreading it and less people coming in because of fear.”*
- *“Reduced the number of children we can offer day care to pre-Covid we were registered for 81 children this has been reduced to 36 children as we now have to work in PODs.”*
- *“We were closed to the public for significant period of time, willing ness and opportunity to seek employment was reduced”.*
- *“As a bus passenger operator, passenger numbers fell by up to 90%.”*
- *“Huge reduction in revenue and increased staff absence”.*

Almost a quarter (23%) of respondents had their normal business activities curtailed/ altered:

- *“80% of stores closed for 18 months”.*
- *“Our business was a 'face-to-face' service prior to Covid-19 but has dramatically transformed into a largely virtual service”.*
- *“Reduced the number of production hours available, drastically increased the price of raw materials and created problems in the supply chain”.*
- *“Transformed our working practices into a blended working approach”.*

- *“Closure of retail stores, social distancing & self-isolation”.*
- *“Business had closed and is now operating on a restricted basis”.*
- *“Substantial increase in numbers seeking support for addiction and mental health during lockdown”.*

12% of businesses said that they were affected by the Pandemic as there were staff shortages and absences:

- *“Staff shortage and absence”.*
- *“Covid at client sites has delayed essential works”.*
- *“Reduced headcount”.*
- *“PPE, Staff isolating or positive, fearful staff, cost of COVID controls, recruitment pressures”.*
- *“Staff absences due to Covid and generally busier than before”.*

11% of participants experienced an increase in workload/ costs:

- *“It emptied my bank account”.*
- *“Material delays and price increases”.*
- *“Cost of inputs and harder to source some things”.*
- *“Additional costs”.*
- *“Reduced the number of production hours available, drastically increased the price of raw materials and created problems in the supply chain”.*

9% of businesses experienced recruitment pressures:

- *“Unable to recruit learners for our programmes due to lockdowns”.*
- *“Staff moved to other sectors”.*
- *“People reluctant to work in care sector as they are worried about Covid in Care Setting. Staff are exhausted from working through pandemic and recruitment of suitable staff is an ongoing hurdle”.*
- *“Increased sales, reduced staff, recruitment issues”.*
- *“It is difficult getting staff as some have been “spoiled” by furlough wages, also we have difficulty getting skilled staff”.*
- *“Retention of staff and recruitment of new staff”.*

Of those surveyed, 6% said their business was impacted by the Pandemic through the need to furlough staff:

- *“Employees furloughed for a while, all back at work now”.*
- *“Yes, employees had to be furloughed in order for the business to survive”.*
- *“Furloughed staff, procurement of products”.*

5% of responses were classed as ‘other’:

- *“No assistance for directors on dividend and nor government want to tax us hard on all the assistance they did not give us”.*
- *“Lack of availability of materials”.*

When asked what supports they would like to see in order to help them deal with the pandemic, a number of businesses stated that the continuation of the current governmental supports in both jurisdictions would be very useful in helping business deal with the ongoing pandemic and an increase in training support. As mentioned earlier, a significant number of workers in the Northern Ireland- Ireland border region have been in receipt of Covid supports in their respective jurisdiction.

The commentaries offered by respondents allow for the classification of the main types of supports identified, with some responses citing more than one type. This can be seen in the table below.

Table 26: Covid-19 recovery support required

Response Category	Frequency of responses	%
Funding/ financial assistance	36	45%
Assistance with upskilling/ addressing of worker shortage	13	16%
Continuation of furlough scheme	10	13%
Provision of further advise/ guidance re: recruitment, remote working etc.	7	9%
Other	14	18%

45% of businesses felt that funding/ financial assistance was the preferable method of assistance:

- *“More funding schemes for workers and apprentices”.*
- *“Clear government guidance and financial assistance to implement any capital changes in the premises”.*
- *“Increased funding for, and availability of relevant, staff upskilling/training”.*
- *“Financial assistance for PPE & screens/directions in the workplace”.*
- *“Cashflow is an ongoing problem as costs are increasing almost daily but rates don't reflect this. Small business needs cash injections to allow them continue to trade”.*
- *“Funding, intermediate labour market or similar employment scheme”.*
- *“More monies towards core costs... we lost income from space rental, workshop fees and support/marketing fees”.*
- *“Grants to train drivers”.*
- *“Continuation of wage supports, grants to hire new staff”.*

16% of participants felt that the skills and worker shortage needed to be addressed:

- *“Assistance with recruitment of staff (additional needed)”.*
- *“Giving details of where to source skilled and qualified workers”.*
- *“Opening Jobs & Benefits Offices again would be a great assistance. I cannot understand why they're not open when all private sector companies and most public sector organisations are working from the office”.*

- *“The Government need to encourage people to get back to work”.*
- *“Help with recruiting skilled and experienced staff”.*
- *“Increase in Tradespeople”.*

13% of responses put forward the idea that the continuation of the furlough scheme was an effective support measure:

- *“An extension of furlough scheme as we would like to keep our employees but with the down turn in business may not be able to”.*
- *“The business has slowed down considerably, especially in last few weeks, as Covid is spreading quickly. Therefore furlough to continue is important as hours are greatly reduced”.*
- *“Continued part-time furlough as long as statutory restrictions are in place”.*
- *“Extension of furlough”.*

9% of participants wanted to see the provision of further guidance regarding recruitment, remote working etc.:

- *“More advice re: staff shortages”.*
- *“Guidance to help businesses understand implications for allowing cross boarder workers to occasionally work from home”.*
- *“Clear instructions for return to work”.*
- *“Guidance on remote working, more guidance on cross border employees & implications”.*
- *“Help with recruitment of staff suitable for the Care Home Setting / Defined Career path for care assistants”.*

Almost a fifth (18%) of responses were classed as ‘other’:

- *“Improved accessibility”.*
- *“Easing movement of goods”.*
- *“Easing of recruitment from Eastern Europe or elsewhere”.*
- *“Better broadband”.*
- *“More foreign nationals into the country, no NI or Tax increases, support with costs of PPE, private sector staff also given £500 from public funds for those who worked through the pandemic - food manufacturing, haulage”.*

Businesses response to Brexit

The overwhelming theme of the responses relating to the impact of the UK’s leaving the EU revealed issues relating to delays in deliveries and supplies, as well as additional logistical complications due to administrative burdens. The majority of respondents (64.6%) stated that the UK’s exit from the EU had affected their business, while 33.8% indicated that it had not. Those businesses responding with specific examples of its impact included supply chain delays and disruption, increased bureaucracy, and difficulties in recruitment as a result of new immigration policies. The table below outlines the principal ways in which businesses had been affected, and the degree to which respondents saw these as impacting on them.

Table 27: Impact of Brexit on business

Response Category	Frequency of responses	%
Delays to deliveries and supply issues	36	38%
More complicated logistics related to business activity/ paperwork in day-to-day work	22	23%
Increased costs	16	17%
Inability to employ EU workers/ lack of EU students	13	14%
Decrease in business	8	8%

Respondents' commentaries shed further light on the nature of the impacts being experienced by their businesses.

38% of respondents cited delays to deliveries and supply issues as an impact of the UK deciding to leave the EU:

- *"Slower lead times on deliveries & confusion on NI being part of UK with many EU supplies".*
- *"Delays in food supplies rising costs".*
- *"Potential barriers to providing services and programmes cross border".*
- *"We have found that deliveries to Northern Ireland are taking much longer and are causing much more issues and prices for stock items have been rising drastically in the last year."*
- *"Harder to get supplies and it takes longer. More admin for sending or receiving products".*
- *"Significant delays when ordering of spare parts and materials sourced from Europe".*
- *"Deliveries from UK have been delayed, lead times have increased causing uncertainty and rework".*
- *"Negative impact in export markets. More difficult moving goods between NI and mainland Britain".*
- *"Brexit has a big impact. we struggle to get materials and the price of materials & transport has radically increased. Also transport times are slower and very expensive".*
- *"Uncertainty over import/export rules, delays".*

Just under one quarter (23%) of businesses stated that more complicated logistics related to business activity/ paperwork was an impact of Brexit:

- *"We have a significant cross border business and Brexit has added legal and financial complexity and substantially impacted on customer confidence within our EU customer base".*
- *"A lot more work involved to get vehicles shipped".*
- *"More bureaucracy. Cost of staff time having to train and then spending time doing declarations etc."*

- *“More customs paperwork”.*
- *“Harder to export to UK”.*
- *“More paperwork, less availability of parts”.*
- *“Increased administration, some raw material supply issues”.*
- *“Harder to get supplies and it takes longer. More admin for sending or receiving products”.*
- *“Availability of materials and plants for job completion external sourcing now from the EU, rise in cost”.*

17% of survey participants experienced an increase in costs:

- *“Customs paperwork and new fees”.*
- *“Increase in prices on goods bought from UK”.*
- *“We have found that deliveries to Northern Ireland are taking much longer and are causing much more issues and prices for stock items have been rising drastically in the last year”.*
- *“We are a haulage company and Brexit has resulted in 40% reduction in staff and fleet; costs have increased with the paperwork overload, custom delays and the complete lack of preparation for Brexit”.*
- *“The supply chain has slowed, timescales to get supplies in increased, costs increased”.*
- *“Costs, shipping, paperwork”.*

14% cited the inability to employ EU workers/students as a barrier:

- *“Can’t employ EU staff without visa”.*
- *“No recruitment applications from EU residents”.*
- *“EU students now need a visa to come to UK for Work Base Learning Programmes”.*
- *“More difficult to recruit language assistants”.*
- *“Foreign students have disappeared”.*
- *“It has reduced the work pool”.*

8% of businesses experienced a decrease in business which they felt was due to the UK decision to leave the EU:

- *“Uncertainty in winning cross border contracts”.*
- *“Redundancies will take place”.*
- *“May have affected client's investment decisions”.*
- *“It has affected our ability to transact insurance business in ROI for our UK based customers”.*
- *“Clients are more reluctant to work in NI”.*

Additional views on cross-border employment

Respondents to the EURES survey were invited to provide any additional comments or concerns regarding cross-border employment, regardless of whether they currently

employed people from elsewhere in the EU. The main issues raised by respondents are set out in the table below.

Table 28: Concerns regarding cross border employment

Response Category	Frequency of responses	%
Cross border tax concerns	8	22%
Employer is positive about cross border employment prospects	7	19%
Employer has some concerns about cross border employment	3	8%
Variation in cross border salary expectations	3	8%
Employer would like access to more comprehensive information about cross border employment	4	11%
Other	11	31%

The most commonly cited response category (22%) was regarding cross border tax issues:

- *“Employees are concerned about dual tax liabilities if they live in the RoI and work in NI”.*
- *“The cross border tax situation for home based workers living in the RoI is absolutely ridiculous. It is inequitable and unjust and a real brake on business growth in the post-Covid era”.*
- *“Cross border employees are often not able to claim any of the 'perks' associated with employment here - i.e. health insurance. It also would appear that claiming tax back now at the end of the year for each employee is cumbersome and more difficult”.*
- *“The tax provisions regarding working from home need to be examined where an employee is resident in one jurisdiction and the employer operates in the other jurisdiction”.*

Just under a fifth of employers (19%) were positive about employing cross border workers:

- *“Living in a cross border region we recruit best staff irrespective of location”.*
- *“Cross border applicants are welcome when vacancies arise”.*
- *“Irish residents fine, but EU nationals are now difficult to employ”.*
- *“The increased opportunities for remote working has made cross-border employment and recruitment from outside an organisation's own jurisdiction more important and attractive than ever before. This means an increased need for support and advice for these cross-border employers and workers”.*
- *“We hope to employ someone in the near future”.*

11% of employers would like access to more comprehensive information about cross border employment:

- *“Setting up and having easy access to a database for skilled and qualified workers from all sectors”.*
- *“I would like to know where to get help with the legal and administrative aspects of employing cross border staff”.*
- *“We have one case of an EU national resident in ROI, she initially received incorrect advice. The process she needed to complete was unclear, needs clearer accessible guidance for those situations over documents to complete”.*
- *“Clearer understanding of the regulations for employees living in EU region and working in NI - visa requirements etc. Also training credentials as we tried to train in ROI but were prevented”.*

8% of businesses had some concerns about employing cross border workers:

- *“We currently do not employ any cross borders employees. If we did we would like them to be able to move freely and not have obstructions like a hard border which would impact on increasing their time travelling to and from work”.*
- *“Cross border employment will prosper if both governments work together with an all island legislation on Covid”.*
- *“We cannot employ staff from Ireland within Security roles as the CTC checks cannot be completed. This affects our ability to recruit”.*

The same number of employers (8%) felt the difference in cross border salary expectations made it hard to employ cross border workers:

- *“The difference in pay expectations and income tax rates makes it difficult to attract cross border workers”.*
- *“Difference in salary expectations”.*

Just under a third of responses were coded as ‘other’:

- *“Apprentices starting their course in the NWRC currently are not allowed to have a placement in ROI. This should not be an issue. They must have a placement to do the course and it's difficult to secure a placement so if a placement is secured across the border then they should be allowed to do the course. Major problem for our area is that there are no apprentices and therefore no bench joinery courses being offered. If more people from across the border were coming to courses in the North then it would benefit the economy and local businesses. They will more than likely choose to do their placement with a company close to their home so for instance if they went to the tech in Derry but lived in Muff they may want to do their placement in Muff. At the minute there isn't enough uptake for the bench joinery course in Derry so they're having to hold one in Limavady but maybe this is because there is no cross border communication and linking”.*
- *“I don't have any concerns about cross-border employment. I have great concerns about how ineffective the Jobs & Benefits Offices are at present due to the fact that they're not open”.*
- *“Current funding from Westminster must match current ESF funding”.*
- *“New employees finding it difficult to open bank account”.*

- *“We have difficulties with people who hold a southern bus licence getting their CPC qualification accepted in the North”.*
- *“NI Govt job websites asking for postcodes and UK phone numbers stopped us advertising positions in NI”.*

Conclusion

In considering what the current cross-border mobility landscape means for potential decisions on how to support jobseekers, workers and employers in the Northern Ireland-Ireland border region, it is important to identify underlying issues whose resolution lies outside the region. However, there are certain characteristics of cross-border mobility that may require strategic decisions by those more closely involved in supporting such mobility, and it is these that will be addressed first.

There is a clear and continuing need to provide support and tailored information and supports to jobseekers, workers and employers in the Northern Ireland-Ireland border region. This need has been further underlined as employers and cross-border workers address the impacts of the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic, including changing patterns of work, and the changed context provided by the UK's departure from the European Union.

The Northern Ireland-Ireland border region continues to be home to a large proportion of the population on the island of Ireland, while a significant percentage of businesses and specific sectors of business activity are concentrated there. Jobseekers, workers and employers facing the impact of Covid-19 along with the challenges and opportunities presented by the UK's exit from the EU will be better equipped and informed with an increased availability of tailored information, advice and support, attentive to the nature of cross-border working and employment.

Wage expectations and issues of taxation arising from the increased use of remote working present significant difficulties to both cross border employers and employees. A shortage of employees with the necessary skills and qualifications is a major difficulty identified by employers, while the need for the continuation and provision of government support for the employment of cross-border workers in the context of the ongoing pandemic are also issues identified as barriers to cross-border employment.

The survey of businesses undertaken by the EURES Cross Border Partnership underlines the vital importance of supporting businesses in the Northern Ireland-Ireland border region to widen their recruitment activities on a cross-border basis. There is the need for advice and support for businesses as they look to adapt to the challenges posed by the Covid pandemic such as the increased demand for remote working, and how to integrate this demand with the need for work to take place on-site. Supporting businesses to do this will contribute to addressing the difficulties businesses encounter in recruiting suitably qualified and skilled staff as well as issues with wage expectations. This will be of even greater importance to sectors with significant growth potential in the region, such as (but not exclusively) information and communication, professional, scientific and technical services, financial and insurance services, and production, where growth is dependent on access to skilled and qualified staff, although such growth will also have to take place in a context where the UK's

departure from the EU means the principle of freedom of movement of EU workers no longer applies in Northern Ireland. Nevertheless, given the unique position that the Protocol on Ireland/Northern Ireland provides to Northern Ireland, there are potential opportunities for businesses in Northern Ireland to operate within and across both the UK and EU markets.

Appendix

Questions from the EURES Cross Border Employer Survey

1: Approximately how many employees does your business employ?

0

1-9

10-49

50-249

250+

2: Which of the terms below best describes the nature of your business?

Agriculture, forestry and fishing

Production

Construction

Motor Trades

Wholesale Trades

Retail Trades

Transport and storage

Accommodation and food service activities

Information and communication

Financial and insurance activities

Property

Professional, scientific and technical activities

Business administration and support services

Public administration and defence

Education

Human health and social work activities

Arts, entertainment, recreation and other services

Other

3: Where is your business mainly based?

County Antrim

County Armagh

County Derry/County Londonderry

County Donegal

County Down

County Fermanagh

County Leitrim

County Louth

County Cavan

County Monaghan

County Tyrone

Other

4: Which of the following would you say are the biggest barriers to recruitment for your firm? Please select as many options as are relevant and also add any reasons not included in this list.

Lack of skills

Lack of suitably qualified personnel

Wage expectations

No need for staff currently

Covid-19 uncertainty

Other

5: Do you employ any staff who are normally resident on the other side of the border? For example, your company is based in Strabane and you have employees who live in Lifford.

Yes

No

6: Approximately, how many cross-border employees does your company employ?

0

1-9

10-49

50-249

250+

7: Which of the following would you say are the biggest barriers to recruitment of cross border workers in your firm? Please select as many options as are relevant and also add any reasons not included in this list.

Lack of skills

Lack of qualified personnel

Wage expectations

No need for staff currently

Covid-19 uncertainty

Other

8: Has the Covid-19 Pandemic affected your business?

Yes

No

9: Do you expect to make staff redundant in the coming year due to the Pandemic?

Yes

No

10: Have your cross border staff worked from home or on site during the pandemic?

From home

At place of business

A combination of from home and at place of business

11: Was there a change in location of workers due to the pandemic?

Yes

No

12: What specific support would assist your business to deal with the Covid-19 pandemic?

13: Has the UK decision to leave the EU affected your business?

Yes

No

If the UK decision to leave the EU has affected your business, please provide details how

14: We would be grateful if you could use the space below to enter any comments or concerns regarding cross-border employment regardless of whether or not you currently employ people from any other part of the EU.

We want to identify factors which will help match up employers with the best possible candidates available so any advice or ideas you might have will be greatly appreciated.

