WDC Insights
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providing insights on key issues for the Western Region of Ireland

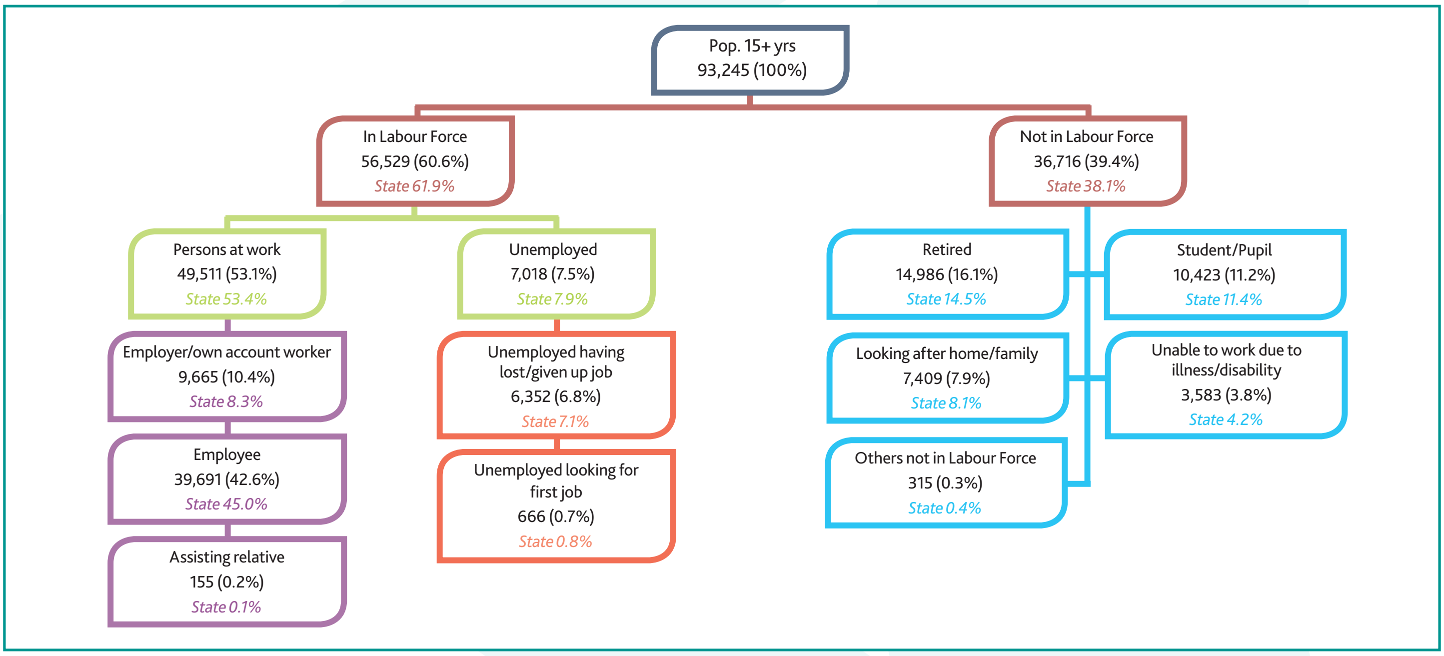
County Clare's Labour Market – Census 2016

In this *WDC Insights* we provide an overview of the labour market in county Clare based on data from the Census of Population 2016.[1] The county had a total population of 118,817 in 2016, 1.4% higher than at the last Census (2011). Clare's population was 7.1% higher than a decade earlier (2006). Total employment in Clare grew 8.6% between 2011 and 2016; below the 11% national growth.

Principal Economic Status of Clare's population

Principal Economic Status (PES) measures the economic status e.g. at work, student, of the population aged 15 years and over. This status is self-assigned and is different from the definition used in the Quarterly National Household Survey (QNHS) and official employment and unemployment figures.[2] Fig. 1 shows Clare's adult population by principal economic status compared with the State average.

Fig. 1: Population of county Clare aged 15 years and over by principal and labour force status, 2016



About 60% of the county's adults are in the labour force, either working or looking for work, slightly below the national average (61.9%). The 56,529 people who are in Clare's labour force represents a 0.7% increase on the 2011 figure (compared with 3.2% growth nationally). Some 53.1% of the county's adults are 'at work'. This was close to the national average, as was the share unemployed. The county's labour force differs most notably from the national pattern in self-employment (employer/own account worker) with Clare having a far higher share; 10.4% compared with 8.3%.

Of the 40% of Clare's adults who are outside the labour force, 'retired' is the largest group and accounts for a higher share than nationally (16.1% v 14.5%). Clare has a lower than average share of its population unable to work due to disability/illness and also a slightly lower share of students /pupils.

1. CSO, Census 2016 Summary Results – Part 2. Table EZ011
2. The ILO definition, used in the QNHS and official employment statistics, is that if a person has worked for payment or profit for 1 hour or more in the previous fortnight they are counted as employed. This results in a higher number being counted as employed than when people are asked to select their own economic status, as in the Census.

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The Western Development Commission (WDC) is a statutory body promoting economic and social development in the Western Region of Ireland (counties Donegal, Sligo, Leitrim, Mayo, Roscommon, Galway and Clare).

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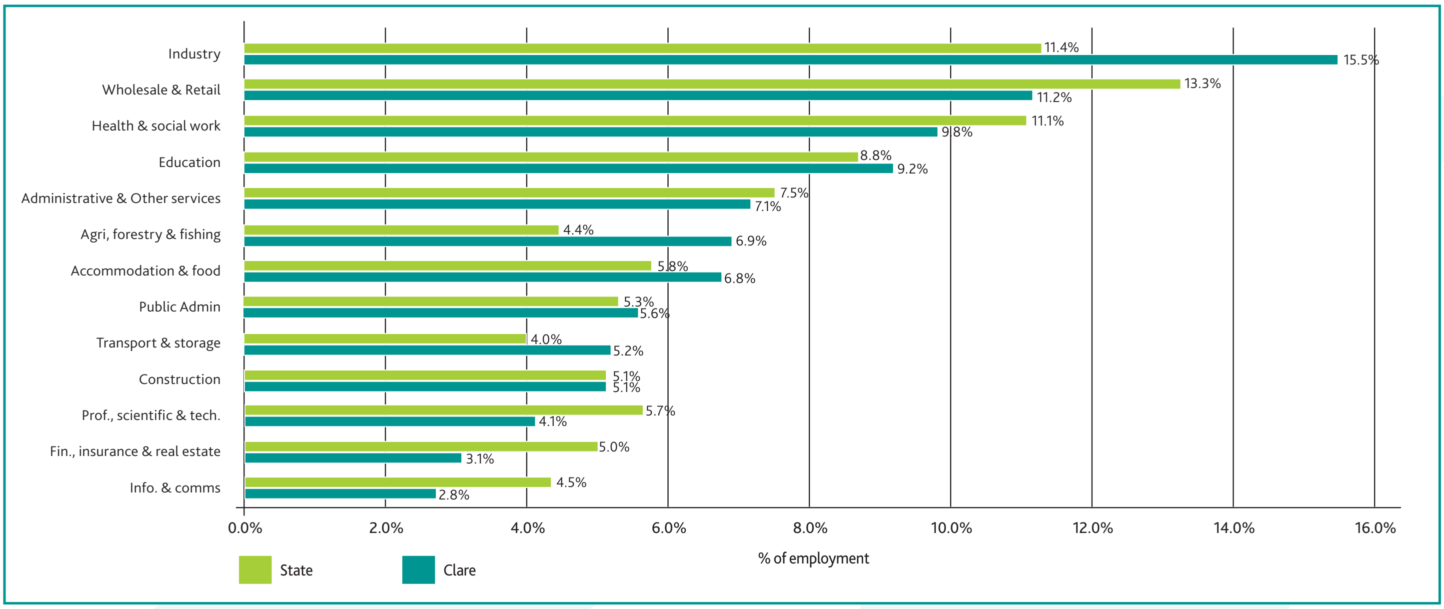
Sectoral pattern & recent changes in employment

Fig. 2 shows the sectors where the 49,511 Clare residents who are 'at work' are employed. Commuting is an important factor, especially given the county's location between two large cities. The 9,886 people living in county Clare who travel outside the county for work are counted here, but the 5,636 people living outside the county who travel into it for work are not. [3]

Fig. 2: Percentage of total employment in each broad sector in county Clare and State, 2016



Industry is a significantly more important employment sector in Clare than nationally, 15.5% of all employment compared with 11.4%. Growing by 10.4% since 2011, Industry in Clare outperformed the national average (9.4%). Wholesale & Retail and Health are both less important in Clare than elsewhere. Wholesale & Retail employment in Clare remained unchanged since 2011, compared with a slight increase nationally (1.7%), while Clare's growth in Health & Social Work (12.4%) was slightly below average (13.4%). Health includes child and elder care.

Though slightly below the national average, Clare has the highest share working in Administrative & Other Services among western counties; this includes leasing activities and business operations processing. While Clare's growth in this sector (12.3%) was lower than average (13.6%), it was the strongest in the Western Region.

Agriculture, Accommodation & Food Service and Transport & Storage are all notably more important to Clare's labour market than nationally. Their fortunes varied however, with Agricultural employment declining 8.7% compare with a 2.6% decrease nationally. Accommodation & Food Service however enjoyed Clare's second highest growth, up 13.5%, compared with 12.9% nationally, indicating strengthening tourism activity; also shown by Clare's strong growth in Transport & Storage (10.1% v 4%) since 2011, influenced by Shannon Airport and Shannon Foynes Port.

Knowledge intensive services (Professional, Scientific & Technical activities, Financial, Insurance & Real Estate and Information & Communications) employ a lower than average share in Clare. However Information & Communications enjoyed the county's strongest employment growth (13.9%), while Professional services also performed well (13.4%); though both below State average growth (31.4% and 22.2% respectively). Financial services in contrast saw employment decline by 8% compared with a 1.3% decline nationally. This is linked to closures of local bank and insurance branches.

It is important that we more fully understand why some of the sectoral changes in employment are taking place in county Clare, and its wider region, and the impact that these are having on the county's economy and its residents.

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All data from CSO, Census 2016 Summary Results – Part 2. Table EZ011

3. Detailed analysis of commuting patterns in the Western Region will be published by the WDC in future.

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