



## The Public Administration & Defence Sector in the Western Region

This *WDC Insights* summarises the key findings of 'The Public Administration & Defence Sector in the Western Region: Regional Sectoral Profile'<sup>1</sup>, the latest in a series of Regional Sectoral Profiles analysing employment in economic sectors in the Western Region.

Public Administration & Defence includes all those working in the civil service, local authorities and state agencies, as well as Gardaí, prison officers and the defence forces. It does not include those working in Education<sup>2</sup>, Health & Care<sup>3</sup> or 'semi-state' companies e.g. Bus Éireann.

### Employment in Public Administration & Defence in the Western Region

According to Census 2016, 18,858 people worked in Public Administration & Defence in the Western Region. It plays a somewhat larger role in the region's labour market than nationally, accounting for 5.6% of total employment in the Western Region compared with 5.3% (Table 1).

At 8.4%, Roscommon has the highest share working in Public Administration & Defence in Ireland with Leitrim (7.9%) second highest and Sligo (7.5%) fourth. Donegal is also in the top ten nationally. In contrast Galway City (3.6%) has the lowest share in Ireland. Clearly there is far greater reliance on Public Administration & Defence employment in the more rural northern half of the Western Region, whereas greater diversity in job options around Galway City reduces dependence on this sector.

With Public Administration & Defence accounting for 11.4% of total employment, Lifford (the county town of Donegal) has the highest share of residents working in the sector in the region and second highest of Ireland's 200 towns and cities (1,500+). Strandhill in Co Sligo (9.4%) and Roscommon town (9.2%) are third and fourth highest nationally.

The number working in this sector in the region grew by 58.5% between 1996 and 2016, while total employment in the region increased 34.2%. This sector's greater increase was due to both expansion in the sector (e.g. greater responsibilities for local

**Table 1: Selected employment indicators for Public Administration & Defence (PA&D) in the Western Region and state, 2016**

County	PA&D as % of Total Employment 2016	No. Employed 2016	% change 1996-2016	% change 2011-2016	% of PA&D that is Female 2016
Clare	5.6%	2,756	80.4%	3.9%	55.0%
Donegal	5.8%	3,391	43.5%	-14.2%	48.7%
Galway City	3.6%	1,262	-5.0%	-12.5%	49.6%
Galway County	4.6%	3,452	79.1%	-7.3%	49.5%
Leitrim	7.9%	1,005	75.1%	-1.8%	55.8%
Mayo	5.6%	2,882	70.7%	-10.1%	50.1%
Roscommon	8.4%	2,159	85.8%	-7.0%	50.0%
Sligo	7.5%	1,951	46.8%	-4.5%	57.0%
Western Region	5.6%	18,858	58.5%	-7.4%	51.4%
State	5.3%	105,929	35.4%	-6.3%	47.6%

Source: CSO, Census 2016: Summary Results Part 2, Table EZ011; CSO, Census of Population 1996, Volume 5 – Principal Economic Status and Industries, Table A0513

1. Download from <https://www.wdc.ie/publications/reports-and-papers/>
2. See WDC (2019) *The Education Sector in the Western Region: Regional Sectoral Profile*
3. See WDC (2018) *The Health & Care Sector in the Western Region: Regional Sectoral Profile*



authorities, new state agencies) and also the relocation of some public and civil service offices to the region e.g. the Property Registration Authority to Roscommon. The decline in Galway City (-5%) over this period was likely due to growth in surrounding commuter towns.

In the more recent period (2011-2016) employment in this sector fell by 7.4% in the region, somewhat more than nationally (-6.3%) and in contrast to overall total jobs growth (7.5% in the region). Donegal, Galway City and Mayo saw particularly large declines, while Clare was the only county with growth.

There is a slight female majority (51.4%) working in Public Administration & Defence in the region, compared with a male majority nationally. This difference is also reflected in the relative importance of the sector to total female employment with 6.2% of all working women in the Western Region employed in this sector compared with 5.1% nationally.

Considering detailed activities within this sector, 80.6% of total employment in Public Administration & Defence in the region is in the 'Civil Service, Public Sector & Local Authorities' sub-sector. The next largest is 'Public Order & Safety' (Gardaí, traffic wardens, coast guard) at 13.9% and 'Defence forces' at 5.5%.

Proximity to an army barracks is the biggest influence on the share working in the 'Defence forces' in different counties while 'Public Order & Safety' is highest in Galway County and Mayo, both large rural and coastal counties with dispersed populations. Sligo, Leitrim and Clare have the highest shares in 'Civil Service, Public Sector & Local Authorities' partly because of the presence of Government Department offices e.g. Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection in Sligo and Carrick-on-Shannon.

## Key Policy Issues

**Greater reliance on public sector employment in the Western Region.** The three primary public sectors (Public Administration & Defence, Health & Care and Education) jointly account for 28% of all jobs in the region compared with 24% in the state. This is also reflected in income. Recent analysis by the CSO<sup>4</sup> found that 41.7% of earned income by employees living in Sligo came from these three sectors combined, the highest share in Ireland, followed by Leitrim (37.8%) and Donegal (37.8%). This reliance means that developments, such as the moratorium on public sector recruitment from 2009 to 2015, had a greater economic and employment impact on the region.

**More important role in female employment in the region than nationally and the gap widened over the past two decades.** It is particularly important in more rural counties (in Leitrim, Roscommon and Sligo 9+% of women work in this sector) while only 3.6% of working women in Galway City do so. Such employment can help maintain the viability of household income, particularly during periods of large private sector job losses e.g. in construction. Future trends in public sector employment will have a greater impact on female than male employment levels.

**Public Administration & Defence plays a critical role in providing professional career opportunities in smaller towns and more rural areas where there are fewer alternatives.** The more rural northern half of the Western Region shows particularly high dependence on the public sector. More limited private sector job options increases the significance of Public Administration & Defence employment. It also increases the sector's economic impact with spending by public sector employees helping to sustain local services. While the main focus for Public Administration & Defence policy must be the provision of quality services to the public, the sector's parallel role as a provider of jobs, particularly in smaller towns and rural areas, should also be taken into account.

**Has the potential to contribute to regional and rural development.** As was highlighted in a previous WDC study 'Moving West'<sup>5</sup> the location of Public Administration & Defence employment is a key policy tool at the disposal of Government. The relocation of public sector offices and jobs from Dublin to other locations has considerable potential to both stimulate development in these areas and to ease pressures on the capital. The Government, national and local, can therefore play a very direct role in delivering the regional development objectives of the National Planning Framework (NPF) through its location decisions. Technology has also evolved hugely to facilitate more dispersed working locations.

For more detailed analysis see 'The Public Administration & Defence Sector in the Western Region: Regional Sectoral Profile' <http://www.wdc.ie/publications/reports-and-papers/>

4. CSO (2019), *Geographical Profiles of Income in Ireland 2016*

5. WDC (2008), *Moving West: An Exploratory Study of the Social and Economic Effects of the Relocation of Public Sector Offices to Towns in the Western Region*