



The Education Sector in the Western Region

This *WDC Insights* summarises the key findings of the report 'The Education Sector in the Western Region: Regional Sectoral Profile',¹ the third in a series of Regional Sectoral Profiles analysing employment and enterprise data for economic sectors in the Western Region.

The Education sector plays a vital role in society, educating our young people, providing lifelong learning and personal development opportunities, as well as the necessary skills for the regional economy. It is also a major source of employment and is the fourth largest employment sector in the Western Region.

Employment in Education in the Western Region

According to Census 2016, 32,349 people were employed in the Education sector in the Western Region. Education plays a greater role in the region's labour market than nationally accounting for 9.7% of total employment compared with 8.8%. Among western counties, Education is most important in Donegal (10.8%) and Galway County (10.2%) which have the highest shares working in Education in Ireland. All western counties, except Mayo, have a higher than average share. The number working in Education in the region grew 4.4% between 2011 and 2016, lower growth than nationally (5.7%). Donegal and Galway County saw the highest growth in the region.

Moycullen in Co Galway (19%) has the highest share of residents working in Education across Ireland's 200 towns and cities. The towns with the next largest shares in the region are Bearna (13.3%), Strandhill (12.2%) and Carndonagh (11.9%) showing the influence of NUI Galway, Galway-Mayo IT, IT Sligo and Letterkenny IT respectively.

Women account for 75.9% of those working in the Education sector in the Western Region, with Galway City having the lowest female share and Roscommon and Leitrim the highest (Table 1). This pattern indicates that pre-primary, primary and secondary education have greater female employment than higher education.

Table 1: Selected employment indicators for Education in the Western Region and state, 2016

County	No. Employed	% Change 2011-2016	Education as % of Total Employment	% of Education that is Female	% of Education that is Self-employment
Clare	4,579	4.5%	9.2%	76.6%	7.5%
Donegal	6,328	7.1%	10.8%	77.2%	4.8%
Galway City	3,465	0.1%	9.9%	69.2%	5.6%
Galway County	7,652	5.1%	10.2%	75.2%	6.2%
Leitrim	1,159	3.8%	9.1%	78.3%	5.1%
Mayo	4,365	2.9%	8.5%	77.7%	5.9%
Roscommon	2,284	4.4%	8.8%	80.3%	4.3%
Sligo	2,517	4.7%	9.7%	74.3%	5.8%
Western Region	32,349	4.4%	9.7%	75.9%	5.8%
State	176,855	5.7%	8.8%	75.5%	6.1%

Source: CSO, Census 2016: Summary Results Part 2, Table EZ011.

1. Download from <https://www.wdc.ie/publications/reports-and-papers/>



Self-employment in Education grew considerably (+13%) between 2011 and 2016. In 2016, 5.8% of those working in Education in the region were self-employed (employer or own account worker). Clare (7.5%) has by far the highest level of self-employment, followed by Galway County indicating greater private sector involvement. In contrast, low self-employment indicates that the public sector is particularly dominant in Roscommon and Donegal.

At 32.2% and 25% of total Education employment respectively, 'Primary' and 'Secondary' are the two largest Education sub-sectors, with a higher share working in both in the region than nationally. In contrast the region has a lower share working in 'Higher Education' (15.2% v 16.8%). 'Pre-primary Education' saw the strongest jobs growth, growing 44.8% in the region (2011-2016) largely driven by introduction of the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Scheme providing a free pre-school place to all children.

Education Enterprises in the Western Region

In 2016 there were 2,710 Education enterprises registered in the Western Region.² There has been relatively steady growth since 2009 when there were just over 2,000. Education enterprises account for 5% of all enterprises in the region, above the 4.4% share nationally. This again reinforces the more significant role played by Education in the regional economy.

Key Policy Issues

Education is a more significant employer in the region than nationally. It plays a critical role in providing professional career opportunities, particularly for women and in more rural areas where there may be fewer alternatives. While the main focus for Education policy must be the provision of quality services, the sector's parallel role as a key regional employer should also be a factor in policy decisions.

Demographic factors will reduce demand at primary and secondary level as it is projected³ that primary school enrolments peaked in 2018, while for second level the numbers will peak in 2024. The decline in demand in the medium-term will impact on future employment trends in the sector. For third level education, while the number of direct transfers from secondary school will decline after 2030, research activities and enrolment by mature and international students means it is not as dependent on demographic trends.

There is lower participation in lifelong learning in the region with just 5% of adults in the Border region engaged in formal education compared with 12% in Dublin.⁴ Policy actions to reduce barriers to accessing lifelong learning and increase participation are required in order to meet the Government's lifelong learning target, to ensure the necessary skills are available within the labour force, to increase demand for lifelong learning in the region and, most importantly, to improve the employment prospects of the region's residents.

Provision of skills needed by the regional economy is a key function of the Education sector. Skills needs are continually changing in response to current and future economic trends and effectively meeting the region's demand for skills involves a wide range of education providers and close engagement with employers. Regional Skills Fora⁵ provide a useful structure for this. Changing skill demands impact on employment in the sector, as emerging skills needs can only be met if teachers, lecturers and trainers with expertise in these areas are available.

Brexit and growing retired population present new opportunities. Brexit is likely to reduce the number of Irish students choosing to study in Northern Ireland or elsewhere in the UK. This is an opportunity for the Irish Education sector and in particular Letterkenny IT and IT Sligo in the Western Region. In addition, students from EU member states wishing to study in an English-speaking country will be more likely to choose Ireland, with 22% growth in CAO applications from EU students since 2016. Another opportunity is demand for Education services for enjoyment and personal development from a growing number of retired people, with demand also driven by increasing disposable income.

For more detailed analysis see 'The Education Sector in the Western Region: Regional Sectoral Profile' <http://www.wdc.ie/publications/>

2. CSO, Business Demography 2016, Table BRA18. This refers to all Education entities e.g. schools, colleges (public, private, community/voluntary) registered with the Revenue Commissioners with an address in the Western Region.

3. Department of Education and Skills

4. CSO (2018), [Adult Education Survey 2017](#). The Border region (NUTS3 2016) is Donegal, Sligo, Leitrim, Cavan and Monaghan.

5. <https://www.regionalskills.ie/>