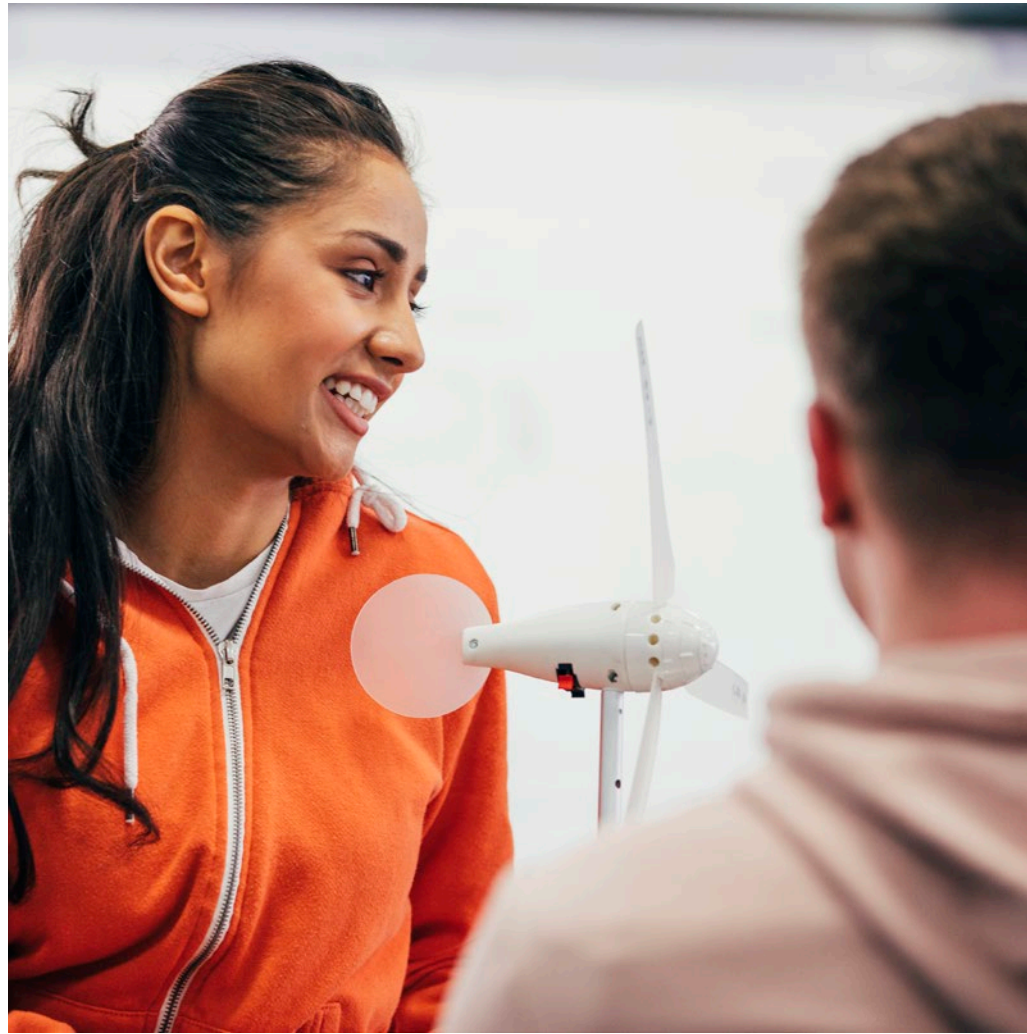




NORTHERN IRELAND

Northern Ireland has a rich history of advanced manufacturing and engineering activity.

NORTHERN IRELAND



Introduction

During the latter part of the twentieth century, the UK government supported a number of high-profile enterprises such as the DeLorean car plant and Bombardier's aerospace facility in Belfast (the latter moved from southern England after World War 2).

Today, the sector is the smallest of any UK region or nation but remains important as a source of good-quality, highly-skilled, private sector jobs in a region which is disproportionately dependent on public sector employment.

Although the Northern Ireland AME sector does contain a number of household names, in common with other parts of the United Kingdom, the vast majority of employers within the sector are SME or micro-sized. The sector's workforce is largely male, in common with other parts of the UK; however, Northern Ireland has a higher proportion of engineering apprentices who are female than any other part of the UK (11% compared with 9% in Wales, 8% in England and just 3% in Scotland).

Like in Scotland and Wales, education and skills is a devolved matter in Northern Ireland, with the Northern Ireland Assembly setting policy and funding guidelines. Unlike other parts of the UK, Northern Ireland has a school system which is fully selective along academic lines. Despite or because of this, depending on one's view, children in Northern Ireland consistently achieve the best GCSE results of any part of the UK. At the time of writing, the Assembly is not operational. In common with other parts of the UK, employers in Northern Ireland with payrolls over £3m per year must pay the apprenticeship levy.

Regional Profile

Northern Ireland has the smallest AME sector of any UK region or nation, according to official government figures. As Northern Ireland has the smallest population, this is to be expected.

Employer size	Micro (0-9 employees)	Small (10-49 employees)	Medium (50-249 employees)	Large (250+ employees)	Total	As percentage of total
East Midlands	9,920	1,315	325	50	11,610	7.4
East of England	13,905	1,610	400	75	15,990	10.2
London	14,705	995	225	50	15,975	10.2
North East	6,180	535	165	35	6,915	4.4
North West	15,120	1,625	375	75	17,195	10.9
Northern Ireland	2,660	370	85	15	3,130	2
Scotland	14,080	1,085	250	65	15,480	9.9
South East	21,125	2,125	470	125	23,845	15.2
South West	11,575	1,265	270	65	13,175	8.4
Wales	5,120	545	160	35	5,860	3.7
West Midlands	13,620	2,110	525	110	16,365	10.4
Yorkshire and the Humber	9,655	1,435	375	65	11,530	7.3
Total	137,665	15,015	3,625	765	157,070	100
As % of Total	87.6	9.6	2.3	0.5	100	

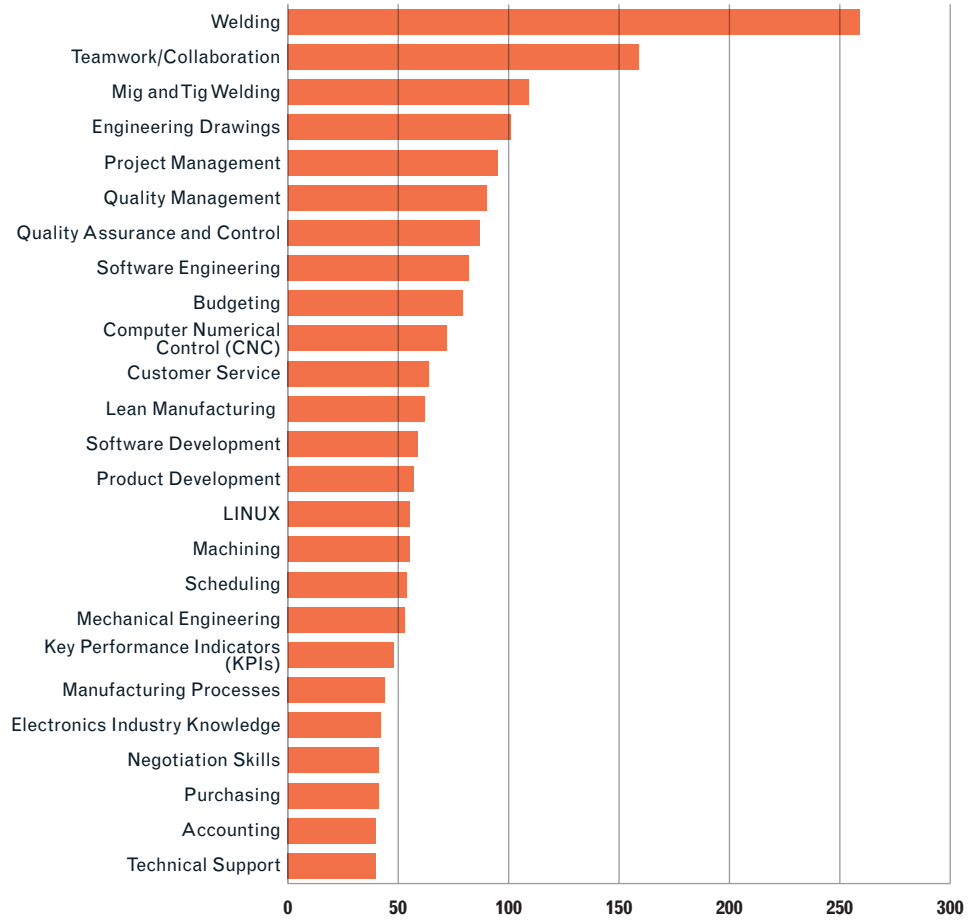
	2018 Employment in AME
East Midlands	112,377
East of England	139,623
London	102,730
North East	56,051
North West	161,874
Northern Ireland	38,878
Scotland	107,941
South East	189,627
South West	144,903
Wales	79,798
West Midlands	192,956
Yorkshire and Humber	120,346
Grand Total	1,447,103



Demand for Skills

In Northern Ireland, according to data for 2017 taken from Labour Insight, welding skills are those most in demand in the AME sector.

Given that the Fabricated Metal Products sector is the largest by employment by some distance, this is to be expected, as is the high demand for engineering drawing skills.



In common with other parts of the UK, amongst more generalist skills communication, problem solving and planning skills are in high demand in the AME sector.



Northern Ireland has a relatively high proportion of its AME workforce without qualifications, and there is projected to be a sizeable decline in the numbers without qualifications over the next five years.

There are training requirements across the Northern Ireland AME sector.



860 Managers require development to **Level 3 or higher**



1,892 Professionals require development to **Level 4 or higher**



1,284 Technicians require development to **Level 4 or higher**



5,610 of those working in Skilled Trades Occupations require development to **Level 3 or higher** – this group accounts for the highest number of workers without qualifications



1,729 Operators require development to **Level 2 or higher**



Northern Ireland employment by sector (SIC groups)

Sector	Northern Ireland 2018	Northern Ireland 2023	2018-23 Northern Ireland change	2018-23 UK change
Fabricated Metal Products	9,591	9,057	-5.60%	-6.10%
Mechanical Equipment	4,732	3,945	-16.60%	-18.80%
Automotive	4,019	3,453	-14.10%	-10.60%
Aerospace	2,836	2,838	0.10%	-3.50%
Electrical Equipment	2,738	2,419	-11.70%	-7.40%
Engineering design activities for industrial process and production	2,181	2,256	3.40%	-1.30%
Repair of machinery Installation of industrial machinery and equipment	2,059	2,147	4.30%	0.20%
Basic Metals	2,046	1,873	-8.50%	-10.10%
Manufacture of computer, electronic and optical products	1,694	1,280	-24.40%	-21.50%
Research and experimental development on natural sciences and engineer	1,448	1,584	9.40%	7.20%
Marine	1,144	1,147	0.30%	-3.50%
Wholesale of metals and metal ores	831	844	1.60%	0.40%
Technical testing and analysis	749	778	3.90%	-1.10%
Repair and maintenance of aircraft and spacecraft	741	770	3.90%	-0.10%
Repair and maintenance of other transport equipment	445	461	3.60%	-0.30%
Other Transport Equipment	358	360	0.60%	-3.30%
Repair of electrical equipment	326	340	4.30%	0.40%
Repair of fabricated metal products, machinery and equipment	311	323	3.90%	-0.20%
Repair and maintenance of ships and boats	285	296	3.90%	0.00%
Repair of electronic and optical equipment	174	182	4.60%	0.30%
Rubber Tyres	170	138	-18.80%	-12.80%
Grand Total	38,878	36,491	-6.10%	-5.50%

Fabricated metal products accounts for the highest employment of any Northern Ireland AME sector, while the province also has relative strength in Mechanical Equipment, Automotive and Aerospace – a number of the sector’s highest-profile employers sit within the latter two sectors (e.g. Wright Brothers, Bombardier).

Across the next five years, there is expected to be a shrinkage of a number of sectors in terms of employment, although there will be a growth in repair sectors and the strategically important Aerospace sector will remain at virtually the same size.





Occupations, qualifications and the skills shift

The most sizeable decline in numbers in any occupational area across the next five years can be seen in skilled trades, where almost 1,500 jobs are expected to disappear.

There will be a slight increase in the numbers employed in professional occupations and management roles, but these increases will not be enough to offset the decrease at lower levels. (The caveat is that these projections were made pre-Brexit and as yet the UK-EU deal has not been agreed – given that Northern Ireland shares a land border with the EU and has a sea border between it and Great Britain, the terms of the deal which govern the movement of manufactured goods and components matter greatly.)

Northern Ireland employment by occupational area

Occupational area	Northern Ireland 2018	Northern Ireland 2023	2018-23 Northern Ireland change	2018-23 UK change
Skilled trades occupations	12,105	10,696	-11.60%	-11.70%
Professional occupations	6,650	6,774	1.90%	0.20%
Associate professional and technical	4,638	4,551	-1.90%	-1.90%
Process, plant and machine operatives	4,636	4,034	-13.00%	-12.90%
Administrative and secretarial	3,425	3,212	-6.20%	-8.50%
Managers, directors and senior officials	3,312	3,315	0.10%	-0.70%
Elementary occupations	2,463	2,268	-7.90%	-9.60%
Sales and customer service	948	922	-2.70%	-4.20%
Caring, leisure and other service	702	719	2.40%	2.30%
Grand Total	38,878	36,491	-6.10%	-5.50%

In common with other parts of the UK, Northern Ireland is expected to see medium-term growth in the numbers with higher education (Level 4+) and a decline in the numbers without higher education (Levels 3 and below) in its AME sector.

Previous Northern Ireland Executives have focused on STEM skills as a key growth area, but at present the Assembly and Executive not in operation.

Ulster University is ranked 16th overall in the UK for General Engineering degree courses, while Queen’s Belfast is ranked 17th for Aeronautical. Northern Ireland’s universities are of a good quality, but there is a brain drain, with 38% of students leaving the province.

Qualification level	Northern Ireland 2018	Northern Ireland 2023	2018-23 Northern Ireland change	2018-23 UK change
No qualification	2,791	1,577	-43.5%	-45.8%
QCF1 GCSE (below grade C) & equivalent	4,925	4,431	-10.0%	-21.8%
QCF2 GCSE (A-C) & equivalent	8,617	8,014	-7.0%	-10.3%
QCF3 A Level & equivalent	8,592	7,148	-16.8%	-14.9%
QCF4 HE below Degree Level	3,561	3,712	4.2%	3.2%
QCF5 Foundation Degree	1,203	1,266	5.2%	6.4%
QCF6 First Degree	6,003	6,540	8.9%	10.2%
QCF7 Other Higher Degree	2,640	3,159	19.7%	4.0%
QCF8 Doctorate	546	644	17.9%	2.2%
Grand Total	38,878	36,491	-6.1%	-5.5%



Gender

The Northern Ireland AME sector will, in common with the rest of the UK, become more gender-balanced in the medium term. The sector’s relatively high proportion of apprentices who are female will undoubtedly contribute to this relative growth.

The Northern Ireland higher education sector has worked hard to attract a higher proportion of female undergraduates – at present around 19% are female, which is lower than the UK average of 21%.

Gender	Northern Ireland 2018	Northern Ireland 2023	2018-23 Northern Ireland change	2018-23 UK change
Females	6,618	6,562	-0.8%	-0.6%
Males	32,261	29,929	-7.2%	-6.7%
Grand Total	38,878	36,491	-6.1%	-5.5%