



Labour mobility in Northern Ireland

Analysis of the determinants of labour mobility, and the degree of and barriers to labour mobility in Northern Ireland

A report prepared by Oxford Economics for the
Department for Employment and Learning

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Scope of this study

Overview

The Department for Employment and Learning (DEL) commissioned Oxford Economics to undertake research into labour market mobility in Northern Ireland. This study reviews the factors that determine labour mobility, presents evidence on the degree of mobility in Northern Ireland, and identifies barriers to mobility that may inhibit the efficient functioning of the labour market.

Definition of labour mobility

This study considers two types of labour mobility:

- **geographic mobility**, which normally refers to either commuting or migration; and
- **labour market status mobility**, which involves moves into or towards employment. The main emphasis is on moves from non-employment (unemployment or economic inactivity) to employment.

Some studies also discuss *occupational mobility* – the ability of workers to move between occupations and sectors, both between and within generations. This type of labour mobility is beyond the scope of this study.

Methodology

The study is based on a number of sources of information:

- a **literature review** by Dr Ian Shuttleworth of Queen's University Belfast and Professor Anne Green of the University of Warwick, two leading experts in labour mobility;
- **consultations with a range of stakeholders** with knowledge and experience of issues pertaining to labour mobility in Northern Ireland, including job centre staff and employers, amongst others;
- **focus groups with the non-employed**; and
- **a telephone survey of the non-employed**.

The study also includes **quantitative analysis of official datasets**, including the Labour Force Survey and results from the 2011 Census. However, at the time of writing local-level origin-destination commuting flow information from the 2011 Census had not been released. It is recommended that research in this area should be further developed once these data become available.

Executive Summary

Introduction

Labour mobility benefits individuals and firms, and is a crucial component of Northern Ireland's long-term economic competitiveness

Labour mobility refers to employment-related moves, either in terms of commuting or moving house to another area (geographical mobility) or a change in labour market status (typically between inactivity, unemployment and employment).

Higher levels of mobility benefit individuals by allowing them to improve their personal economic circumstances through moving into work. Increased mobility enables firms to draw from a larger pool of potential workers, helping them to fill vacancies more quickly, find workers with skills and experience that are more closely matched to their needs, and keep wage inflation down. Taken together, such benefits mean that greater mobility allows Northern Ireland to make the best possible use of its workforce, and ultimately reduce poverty and social exclusion.

Northern Ireland is only just emerging from recession and has the highest claimant count unemployment rate of all UK regions. There is therefore a short-term need to get people back into work. But in an increasingly globalised and competitive world there is also a need to consider how Northern Ireland can increase its competitiveness for the longer term, quickly adapt to technological advances and exploit new commercial opportunities.

Against this backdrop, Oxford Economics has been commissioned by the Department for Employment and Learning to compile a comprehensive and up-to-date overview of labour market mobility in Northern Ireland.

Geographical mobility in Northern Ireland

There is a clear east-west divide in the Northern Ireland labour market

The distribution of employment in Northern Ireland is characterised by an East-West divide, with employment concentrated in and around Belfast, and fewer opportunities in the west and south. Barriers to employment differ between urban and rural areas: perceptions or non-spatial barriers are more important in urban areas, whilst simple distance may be the principle barrier in rural areas. Previous research has shown that policies to bring work to areas with few opportunities are unlikely to be effective.

Fewer people move house in Northern Ireland than in other UK regions and public transport provision means there is a reliance on the car for daily commuting

Regional migration within Northern Ireland is not an effective mechanism for addressing spatial disparities within Northern Ireland: most house moves are relatively local and throughout the last decade relatively fewer people have moved house than in other parts of the UK. Only 29 per cent of non-employed individuals surveyed said they would be willing to move to another part of Northern Ireland to obtain employment.

The average commuting time in Northern Ireland is around 23 minutes, similar to other UK regions outside London. However, Northern Ireland is extremely dependent on the car: just six per cent of workers travel to work on public transport, the lowest amongst UK regions.

Barriers to geographical labour mobility in Northern Ireland are similar to other parts of the UK, although a lack of transport provision for those without cars is a particular challenge in Northern Ireland

Many of the drivers of geographical mobility in Northern Ireland are in line with those identified in the broader literature. Younger people, males and the more highly skilled tend to be more mobile. For the non-employed, the main barriers to geographical mobility are travel costs relative to salary; an unwillingness to move away from the local area; a lack of car access; and the availability, reliability and affordability of public transport. Transport barriers to employment are greater in rural areas, although they can also discourage individuals from taking jobs in certain areas of Belfast where there is no direct transport route.

Although not a concern for the majority of the population, consultations suggested the 'chill factor' can still be an issue for parts of the community in Belfast and, to a lesser extent, in Derry~Londonderry

Previous research has identified that the functioning of the Northern Ireland labour market can be inhibited by a 'chill factor', whereby some individuals are reluctant to travel through certain areas or work at a workplace dominated by individuals from a particular religious background due to a real or perceived threat of violence.

For the majority of the population chill is not a concern. 89 per cent of non-employed respondents to the telephone survey undertaken for this study said there were no areas within a reasonable distance of their home that they would not be willing to work. The 2012 Northern Ireland Life and Times Survey suggests that over 70 per cent of people would not be concerned about applying for a job in an area dominated by the opposite religious background.

However, stakeholder consultations revealed that the chill factor does continue to affect some individuals in Belfast and, to a lesser extent, Derry~Londonderry. Within Belfast, some of the non-employed identified certain parts of the city they would feel unsafe working in. Other stakeholders reported that chill remains a real issue amongst young men from certain working class areas who are unwilling to work outside their 'comfort zone'. Anecdotally there was a sense that the situation had improved in recent years, but has regressed over the last year due to flag protests and associated events. One stakeholder suggested a link between chill and the wider economic climate. JBO staff in Ballymena reported that while individuals in the town were not reluctant to travel to any particular areas, some might still be reluctant to take a job in a workplace dominated by workers from the opposite religious background.

This evidence should be treated with caution: previous research has shown that chill-type factors are often confounded with other considerations, such as a general unwillingness to travel far from one's own neighbourhood, or a general sense that an area is unsafe (perhaps due to general criminality rather than sectarianism). Fears may also sometimes be based on perceptions that are outdated and/or incorrect.

The need for geographical mobility in Northern Ireland is likely to increase going forward

Based on Oxford Economics' forecasts, very few areas in Northern Ireland are expected to see employment growth in excess of working age population growth between 2008 and 2024¹. Nonetheless, Belfast, Antrim and Derry~Londonderry will need to 'import' workers from elsewhere

¹ Source: Oxford Economics Local Model

in Northern Ireland. Job prospects in many rural areas are unlikely to improve and may actually worsen in many cases. The concentration of projected employment growth in and around Belfast suggests geographical mobility within Northern Ireland will need to increase.

Labour market status mobility in Northern Ireland

Compared to other parts of the UK, it is relatively difficult in Northern Ireland to quickly re-enter employment after becoming unemployed

Northern Ireland has a relatively large proportion of unemployment benefit claimants who have been out of work for between six and 24 months, suggesting it is relatively difficult to re-enter employment quickly after becoming unemployed. Compared to other UK regions there is a greater reliance on the state to move people out of unemployment in Northern Ireland: a large proportion of people who stop claiming unemployment benefit in Northern Ireland enter “government supported training” or “education or approved training”.

The drivers of labour market status mobility in Northern Ireland are broadly similar to those suggested by wider research

Similar to geographical mobility, the research for this project identified that many of the drivers of labour market status mobility in Northern Ireland are consistent with previous research. Those who are older and male are likely to be unemployed for longer. Persons with a disability face additional challenges in entering employment: fewer jobs may be suitable for them and they may face negative perceptions from employers. A lack of experience, qualifications, or references were identified as barriers to gaining employment. Attitudes are also important: some job seekers prefer the security of benefits to a potentially small and uncertain increase in income from working. A lack of motivation or confidence, or coming from a family with a history of worklessness can also inhibit a move into employment.

This research found mixed evidence on the impact of having children on labour mobility. On the one hand, a lack of access to affordable childcare can be a barrier to employment and having children limits the flexibility of parents to take work with non-standard hours. On the other hand, children may act as a motivating factor in seeking work: a larger proportion of those without dependent children have been unemployed for more than a year.

Access to information may be a barrier to employment for certain sub-groups

A relatively large share of jobseekers in Northern Ireland rely on Jobs and Benefits Offices (JBOs) and Job Centres (JCs) as their main means to search for a job. There was no strong evidence that a lack of access to information is a barrier to employment, although this may be a factor for certain groups, such as young people without the skills or confidence to engage with the support available at JBOs and JCs, or persons with a disability.

The research has identified clear evidence of the ‘benefits trap’ and a ‘labour market queue’

Consistent with previous research, this project found clear evidence of the ‘benefits trap’ whereby some non-employed individuals prefer the security of benefits income to uncertain income from a job that may not last. Focus group participants explained that when deciding whether to apply for a job they looked at the number of contracted hours and pay to assess whether it would provide enough income to withdraw from benefits. Some believed their income would fall if they entered employment. This issue may be particularly acute within Northern Ireland, which has the lowest average wages amongst UK regions.

Most non-employed focus group attendees were seeking a permanent, full-time position to make it financially attractive to come off benefits. Some were reluctant to take short-term temporary positions because of the difficulty of signing on and off benefits. Some of those claiming benefits may be unwilling to work at evenings and weekends, or have unrealistic salary expectations. Almost one quarter of survey respondents suggested they would need a wage of at least £300 per week to enter work. Zero hours contracts were identified as problematic because they create uncertainty about income and benefit entitlements. Nonetheless, zero hours contracts can provide useful flexibility for some groups of workers, such as students returning home for the holidays.

The research for this project supported the literature review finding that there is a 'labour market queue' and that an individual's place in the queue is determined by the interaction of a range of personal factors. Older, sicker and less skilled claimants may have particular difficulties finding work in the current economic climate. Graduates are currently taking jobs that would previously have been taken by unskilled or low-skilled workers.

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank all of those who contributed their time to take part in the consultations for this paper.

Employers:

- IKEA in East Belfast
- A Belfast city centre hotel
- A Derry~Londonderry based technology company

Other Stakeholders:

- Disability Action
- Gingerbread NI
- Institute for Conflict Research
- Northern Ireland Community Relations Council
- Supported Employment Solutions and Cedar Foundation²
- Youth Council for Northern Ireland

Jobs and Benefits office staff from:

- Ballymena Jobs and Benefits Office (four members of staff)
- West Belfast (Falls Road) Jobs and Benefits Office (three members of staff)
- Derry~Londonderry (Foyle) Jobs and Benefits Office (three members of staff)
- Strabane Job Centre (two members of staff)

Jobs Club participants in:

- Coleraine (five participants)
- West Belfast (Falls Road) (five participants)
- Derry~Londonderry (Foyle) (two participants)
- Strabane (four participants)

Telephone survey participants:

- 1,078 individuals gave up their time to participate in a telephone survey for this work

² The same consultee represented both Supported Employment Solutions and the Cedar Foundation

1 Introduction

1.1 Project context

Labour mobility refers to changes in the location of workers in terms of where they work (geographical mobility) or their status in the labour market (typically between inactivity, unemployment and employment). Increasing mobility allows individuals to improve their personal economic circumstances through moving into work. Increased mobility can enable firms to draw from a larger pool of potential workers, helping them to fill vacancies more quickly with workers with skills and experience that are a closer match for their needs. At the aggregate level, increasing mobility can support Northern Ireland's competitiveness by ensuring people are in jobs that are the best match for their skills; by helping to control wage inflation; and by enabling the economy to adapt rapidly to technological advances and exploit new commercial opportunities. By getting more people into work, mobility also reduces poverty and social exclusion.

Northern Ireland is only just starting to emerge from recession and has the highest claimant count unemployment rate of all UK regions³. There is therefore a short-term need to get people back into work. But in an increasingly globalised world there is also a need to consider how Northern Ireland can increase its long-term competitiveness, and labour mobility will be a significant component of that.

Beyond the standard economic arguments, Northern Ireland's history has left it with specific challenges in terms of the division of the labour market and social spaces which impinge on labour mobility. Violence, either actual and directly experienced, or indirect and perceived, has influenced attitudes and behaviour and may lead to a reluctance to travel through or work in particular places.

In light of all of the above, the Department for Employment and Learning has commissioned Oxford Economics to undertake research into labour mobility in Northern Ireland to review the factors that determine mobility, and identify how barriers to mobility may be reduced to support the efficient functioning of the labour market and help drive economic growth.

1.2 The economic situation in Northern Ireland

Historically the Northern Ireland economy has been weak and slow growing with high rates of unemployment. During the Troubles, the poor performance of the economy was seen as contributing to the violence, which put social and labour market policies at the centre of government policy as increasing wealth and distributing this wealth more widely was seen as a means to reducing or even ending violence.

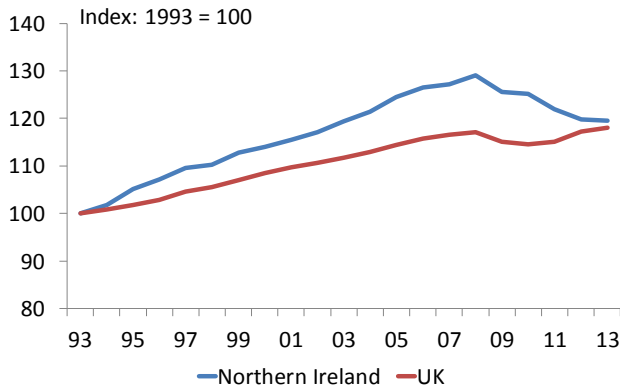
By the late 1990s and early 2000s, Northern Ireland saw sustained jobs and incomes growth (Figures 1.2.1 and 1.2.2) that made it one of the fastest growing UK regions. By 2007, the claimant count unemployment rate had fallen to the UK average (Figure 1.2.3).

However, Northern Ireland was hit hard by the recession and recovery has been weaker than elsewhere in the UK (Figure 1.2.4). The claimant count unemployment rate has risen back above

³ Northern Ireland Labour Market Statistics Press Release January 2014, Table 3. Data relate to December 2013

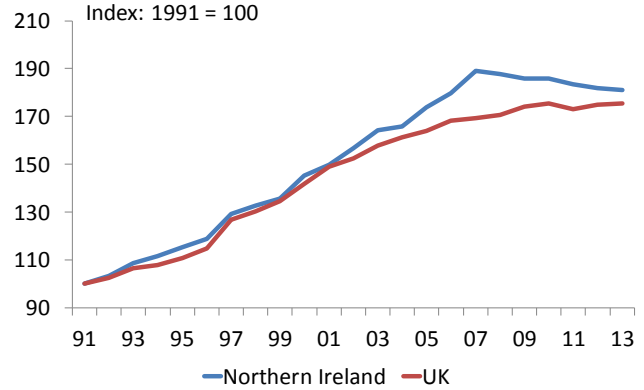
the UK average, and youth and long-term unemployment are particular problems. Between 2008 and 2013 the Northern Ireland economy is estimated to have lost a net total of 50,000 jobs, with many losses in higher-paying full-time posts.

Figure 1.2.1: Employment, 1993 to 2013



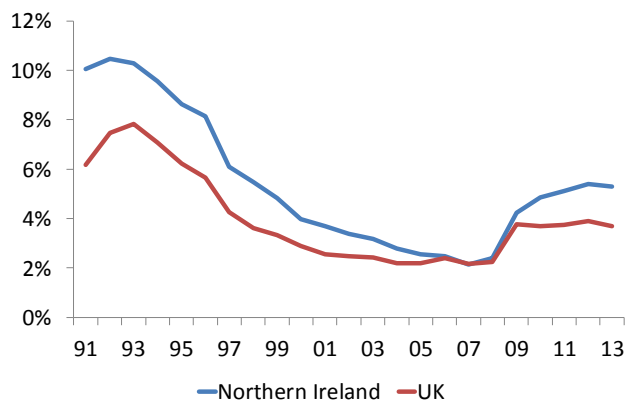
Source: Oxford Economics

Figure 1.2.2: Income growth, 1991 to 2013



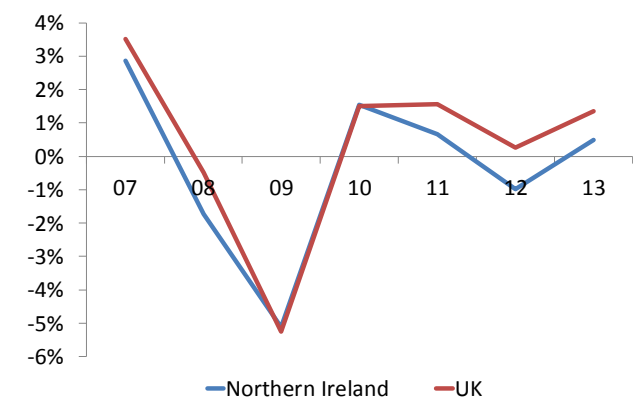
Source: Oxford Economics

Figure 1.2.3: Claimant count unemployment rate, 1991 to 2013



Source: Oxford Economics

Figure 1.2.4: GVA growth, 2007 to 2013



Source: Oxford Economics

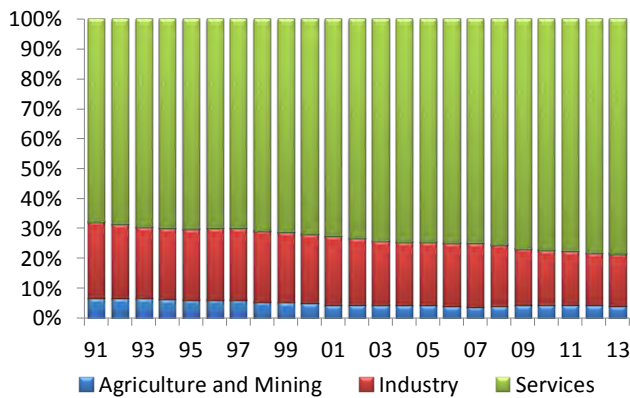
At the same time a number of structural challenges remain. In common with other parts of the UK, Northern Ireland has experienced de-industrialisation and a shift towards services employment (Figure 1.2.5). This has been accompanied by increases in long-term unemployment and a greater reliance on the public sector as a source of employment (Figure 1.2.6). Benefit dependency is also a challenge: the proportion of the population claiming Disability Living Allowance is more than twice the UK average for example (Figure 1.2.7).

Looking ahead, Oxford Economics' forecasts suggest that average net employment growth between 2014 and 2024 will be 2,000 per year, compared to 13,000 per year between 1994 and 2007 (Figure 1.2.8). With such low rates of job creation forecast, and the working age population expected to decline only slightly, the challenges faced by the Northern Ireland labour market over the coming decade are significant.

Set against this economic backdrop, labour mobility is of crucial importance to Northern Ireland's economic future. A growing population, combined with limited employment opportunities in some

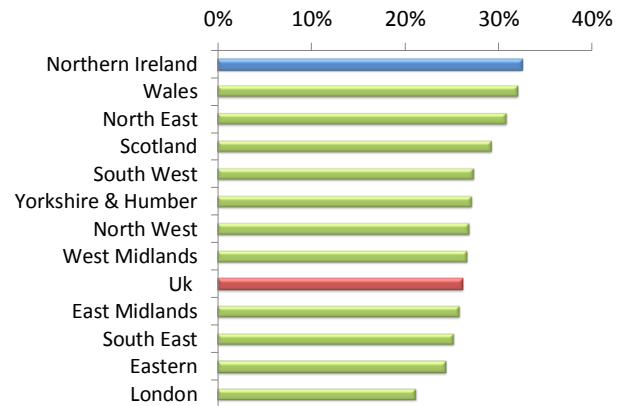
parts of the country mean it is essential Northern Ireland has a more mobile workforce to enable as many people as possible to take up work and contribute to the country's prosperity.

Figure 1.2.5: Employment by broad sector, 1991 to 2013⁴



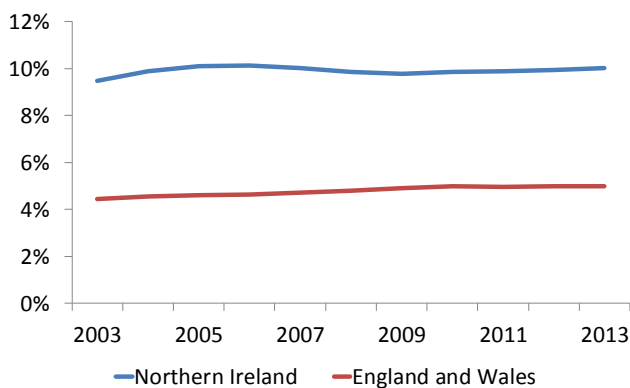
Source: Oxford Economics

Figure 1.2.6: Proportion of employment in public sector, 2013



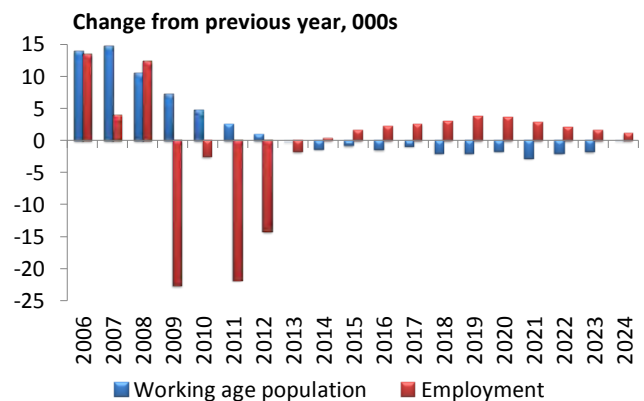
Source: Oxford Economics

Figure 1.2.7: Proportion of working age population claiming Disability Living Allowance, 2003 to 2013



Source: Department for Work and Pensions, Oxford Economics

Figure 1.2.8: Forecast employment and working age population, 2006 to 2024



Source: Oxford Economics

1.3 Report structure

The report is structured as follows:

- Section 2 sets out the methodologies used to gather and analyse the information used in the research that has informed this report.
- Section 3 provides a definition of labour mobility and an overview of the drivers of labour mobility identified in previous research.
- Section 4 provides an overview of the current extent of geographic labour mobility in Northern Ireland.

⁴ Industry includes manufacturing, energy and water supply, and construction

- Section 5 presents the findings of our research into the drivers of geographical labour mobility in Northern Ireland.
- Section 6 sets out recent trends in labour market status mobility in Northern Ireland.
- Section 7 presents the findings of our research into the drivers of labour market status mobility in Northern Ireland.
- Section 8 presents the main findings from the telephone survey of the non-employed.
- Section 9 describes recent policy developments.
- Section 10 suggests areas for further research.

2 Methodology

2.1 Introduction

This project has used a range of techniques and sources to develop a comprehensive and up-to-date overview of labour market mobility in Northern Ireland. The individual strands of research are described below.

2.2 Literature review

The first substantive stage of the project was a literature review undertaken by Dr Ian Shuttleworth of Queen's University Belfast and Professor Anne Green of the University of Warwick, two leading experts in labour mobility.

The aim of the literature review was to not only summarise recent research into labour mobility, with a specific focus on Northern Ireland, but to provide focus for the other stages of the project. The authors were set the following remit:

- to review recent research, with a particular focus on that pertaining to Northern Ireland;
- to suggest a working definition of the term 'labour mobility';
- to identify drivers and barriers to labour market mobility, including those that may be specific to Northern Ireland;
- to draw out conclusions on the relationship between skills and labour mobility; and
- to identify best practice policy examples.

The literature review played an instrumental role in informing the subsequent stages of the project, and this report draws extensively and directly from its content. The full literature review is included at Annex A. Papers included in the literature review were identified through a combination of the authors' expertise and knowledge, and suggestions from DEL officials. A full bibliography is included alongside the review in Annex A.

2.3 Approach to qualitative research

The objective of the qualitative research was to develop a multi-dimensional picture of labour mobility in a small number of locations in Northern Ireland. This approach was chosen to test whether the perspectives of different groups in each location were consistent with each other, and to enable contrasts to be drawn between different parts of Northern Ireland.

Evidence on labour mobility issues was gathered through three types of stakeholder in each location:

- Job centre staff
- The non-employed
- Employers

The location-specific evidence from these consultations has been complemented by interviews with a number of other stakeholders, most of which have a Northern Ireland-wide perspective on labour mobility issues. The consultation process for each group is described below.

Locations were identified through a combination of quantitative analysis and discussion with DEL officials. The quantitative component was based on a comparison of ward level unemployment and

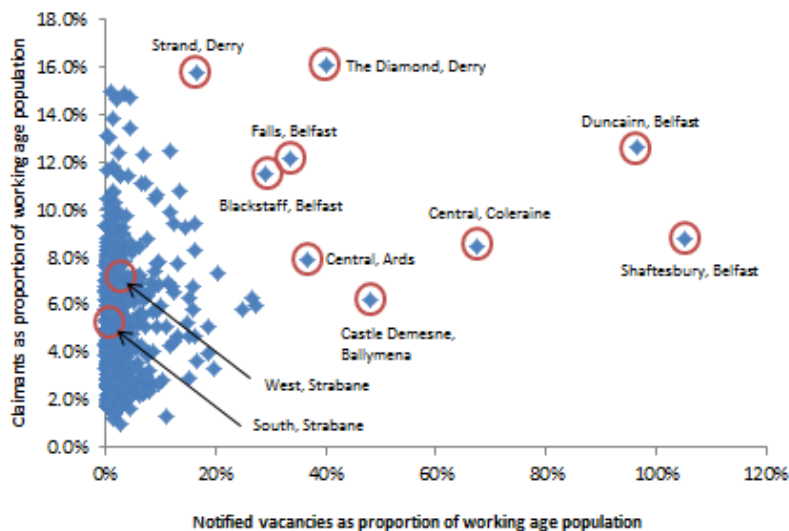
vacancies data to identify local areas where there are concentrations of both unemployed people and vacancies. The co-existence of vacancies and unemployed individuals in a particular locality should, all else being equal, suggest that worklessness in that locality results from a more complex set of factors than simply an inadequate supply of jobs.

The results from this quantitative exercise are presented in Figure 2.3. The areas circled in red have high rates of both claimants and vacancies, suggesting unemployment is not solely a result of an inadequate supply of jobs. Based on a combination of this analysis and the experience of DEL officials, a final shortlist of four locations was obtained:

- Ballymena / Coleraine
- Belfast
- Derry~Londonderry
- Strabane

It was felt that this shortlist of locations provided a good mix of urban and rural areas, and ensured representation from across much of Northern Ireland.

Figure 2.3: Claimant count and vacancy rate, NI wards, 2011



Source: Nomis, Oxford Economics

2.3.1 Interviews with job centre staff

Interviews were undertaken with small groups of two or three staff at four Jobs and Benefits Offices or Job Centres (JBOs/JCs) at the following locations during January 2013:

- Ballymena Jobs and Benefits Office (four members of staff)
- West Belfast (Falls Road) Jobs and Benefits Office (three members of staff)
- Derry~Londonderry (Foyle) Jobs and Benefits Office (three members of staff)
- Strabane Job Centre (two members of staff)

Due to the small number of interviewees at each location, in some sections of the report the evidence from JBO/JC staff has not been attributed to a particular JBO or JC to avoid the risk of potentially contentious statements being attributable to specific individuals.

2.3.2 Focus groups with the non-employed

Focus group discussions were held at the regular 'Jobs Club' sessions at the following locations during December 2013 and January 2014:

- Coleraine (five participants)
- West Belfast (Falls Road) (five participants)
- Derry~Londonderry (Foyle) (two participants)
- Strabane (four participants)

The focus groups were facilitated by representatives from Perceptive Insight Market Research (PIMR) Limited, and followed a fixed topic guide. The topic guide was developed by PIMR, Oxford Economics and DEL, and was designed to explore subject areas identified in the literature review as warranting further research. A copy of the topic guide is presented at Annex B.

Although eight to 10 job seekers agreed to attend each discussion as shown above, the number of actual participants was much lower⁵. The Job Centre staff indicated it was mainly young job seekers who had failed to attend. Attendance at Job Club is voluntary, and so the findings from the focus groups should be regarded as representative of job seekers who are more proactive and engaged. The less engaged, longer-term unemployed are less likely to attend such groups and the evidence gathered from the focus groups is less likely to be representative of their views.

Participants included those who have previously been in employment; those who had been made redundant; short-term and long-term unemployed; younger and older job-seekers; and those who had relocated to an area. Although participants' health status was not requested, during discussions it came to light that multiple participants had mental health and literacy issues.

Most of the roles that participants had previously engaged in were unskilled or semi-skilled and towards the minimum wage end of the salary scale. Previous jobs included:

- Car valeting
- Community work
- Healthcare
- Hospitality
- Office administration
- Retail
- Sales
- Security
- Textile manufacturing

Participants had left these roles for a range of reasons, including redundancy; contracts ending; having children (and now returning to work); relocating back to a home town; sickness; and being unwilling to work unsociable hours.

In some parts of the report focus group evidence has not been attributed to a particular location to ensure that comments cannot be associated with specific individuals.

2.3.3 Employer interviews

Oxford Economics undertook a mixture of face-to-face and telephone interviews with employers to gather evidence on their experiences of recruitment and labour mobility in Northern Ireland. The original intention was to gather views from major employers across the different case study locations, but not all of the companies approached were willing to participate. Nonetheless, interviews were undertaken with three large employers:

⁵ Nine participants turned up at the West Belfast session, but four chose not to participate in the focus group but to focus on the activities on the Job Club.

- IKEA in Belfast
- A Belfast city centre hotel
- A Derry~Londonderry based technology company

The topics for the employer interviews were once again informed by the literature review. The topic guide for these interviews is at Annex C.

2.3.4 Interviews with other stakeholders

Oxford Economics undertook face-to-face and telephone interviews with a range of other stakeholders with insight into issues pertaining to labour mobility in Northern Ireland. These stakeholders were:

- Disability Action
- Gingerbread NI
- Institute for Conflict Research
- Northern Ireland Community Relations Council
- Supported Employment Solutions and Cedar Foundation (one consultee represented both organisations)
- Youth Council for Northern Ireland

The topic guide for this group of consultees was similar to that used in the employer interviews, and can also be found in Annex C.

2.4 Quantitative research

Alongside the qualitative evidence gathered through the consultations, this research incorporates a range of quantitative analysis using data from sources such as the 2011 Census, Labour Force Survey, and Claimant Count. The results from this analysis provide an overview of the current situation and recent trends in labour mobility in Northern Ireland, and analysis of the links between labour mobility and socio economic characteristics, such as gender, age, skills, car access, household type, religious background, sector, occupation and employment status.

Section 5.5 includes a comparison of population and employment projections for local authority areas in Northern Ireland to examine the extent to which the growth patterns of population and employment may not overlap and, therefore, the extent to which it further increases in geographic labour mobility may be required in future.

Oxford Economics also developed a bespoke model of labour market status mobility in districts across England, Wales and Northern Ireland to identify which local areas in Northern Ireland experience levels of labour mobility significantly higher or lower than would be expected given the characteristics of the local population. A full explanation of the approach and results is set out in Annex D.

The final strand of quantitative analysis comprised a telephone survey of the non-employed. This was undertaken by Perceptive Insight Market Research in February 2014 and included telephone interviews with 1,078 individuals, out of an initial sample of 3,866 drawn from the DEL database of benefit recipients. The sample of 3,866 was drawn at random using individuals' randomly-allocated reference numbers. Sampling continued until the characteristics of the sample matched those of the stratification group in terms of age group, gender and benefit type (JSA, ESA, Other).

2.5 Presentation of results

The research described above has yielded an extremely large quantity of evidence. This has been filtered to identify the main messages across the various drivers of labour mobility, and these are reported thematically in Sections 4 to 8 of this report.

3 Definition and drivers of labour mobility

3.1 Definition of labour mobility

The literature review authors propose a working definition of labour mobility as “*employment-related moves*”. This, in turn, breaks down into two dimensions, described below and summarised in Figure 3.1.

3.1.1 Geographic mobility

This refers to physical moves linked directly or indirectly to employment, or the ability of people to access locations of employment. The main considerations within geographic mobility are the spatial distribution of workplaces relative to places of residence; transport networks; and individuals’ ability to access transport at the times it is needed to access employment.

Geographic mobility takes two main forms: commuting and migration. Commuting is associated with journeys-to-work (usually on a daily basis), while migration involves a change of residence. Some workers may also choose some form of ‘in between behaviour’, such as long distance weekly commuting, or temporary stays away from their main place of residence whilst on short term assignments.

The primary emphasis of this study is on employment-related moves *within* Northern Ireland; it does not include significant discussion of migration into or out of Northern Ireland, either from other parts of the UK or internationally.

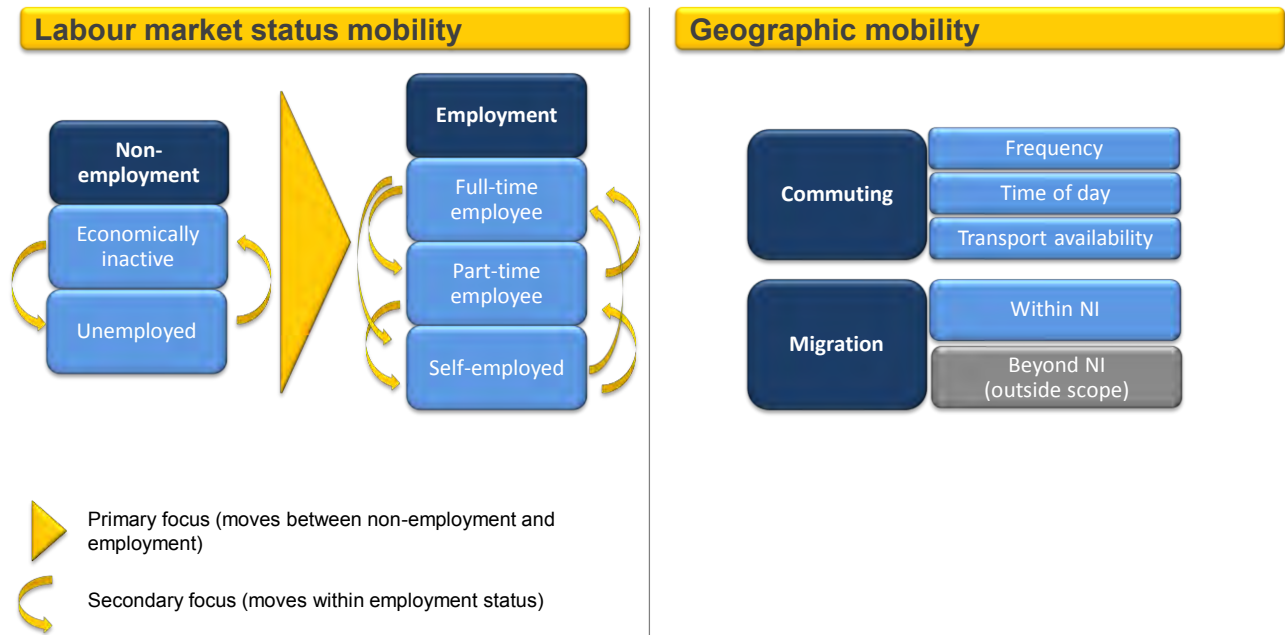
3.1.2 Labour market status mobility

This involves moves into or towards employment. The primary emphasis is on moves between non-employment and employment, i.e. from economic inactivity (encompassing the long-term sick or disabled, those looking after the family / home, students, retired and others who may or may not be seeking work at the current time) to employment, and from unemployment to employment.

A secondary emphasis could be between employment status categories, such as from economic inactivity to unemployment (or vice versa), and transitions between the full-time employee, part-time employee and self-employed categories.

Some studies also discuss *occupational mobility* – the ability of workers to move between occupations and sectors, both between and within generations. This is beyond the scope of the current study.

Figure 3.1: Aspects of labour mobility considered in this study



3.2 Drivers of labour mobility identified in previous research

The literature review at Annex A provides a comprehensive overview of the recent research into the determinants of labour mobility. This section presents an abridged version of the main findings, and the framework for the drivers of mobility.

Table 3.2 presents the main determinants of labour mobility identified in previous research, and the most important factors that influence an individual's degree of mobility, either positively or negatively. The determinants are split into five groups in the left-hand column of Table 3.2: factors specific to individuals; features of the circumstances the individual finds themselves within; the practices of employers; local contextual factors; and national contextual factors.

Each group of factors is discussed in the sub-sections of Section 3.2 that follow. The evidence in this section is a summary of the findings from the literature review. It relates to labour mobility in general and, for the most part, is not specific to Northern Ireland. Evidence relating specifically to Northern Ireland is presented in later sections of the report.

Table 3.2: Drivers of labour mobility

| Groups | Drivers | Positively associated with mobility | Negatively associated with mobility |
|-----------------------------|---|--|---|
| Individual Factors | Demographic characteristics | Male, younger people | Female, older people |
| | Health and wellbeing | Healthier people | Less healthy people |
| | Economic position and work history | Employed, history of employment | Unemployed or inactive, history of joblessness |
| | Frame of reference | | |
| | Labour market and job seeking knowledge | Wider perceptual horizons | Restricted spatial horizons |
| | Skills and attributes | Higher skills, more qualifications | Lower skills, less or no qualifications |
| Individual Circumstances | Household circumstances | Others working in the household | Others not working in the household |
| | Access to resources | Access to a car or van | No access to private transport |
| Employer Practices | Recruitment and selection practices | Formal recruitment practices | Informal recruitment practices and 'word of mouth' |
| | Working practices | Stable long-term work | Unstable short-term work |
| Local Contextual Factors | Quantity and Quality of local jobs | Direction of association unclear. Local jobs helpful, but may discourage some workers from seeking more suitable employment further afield | |
| | Local work culture | Free access to work with no social barriers | Traditions and practices of restriction (e.g. chill factor) |
| | Local labour market operation and norms | | |
| | Local infrastructure | Good public transport and infrastructure to permit mobility (e.g. good road network) | Poor public transport, congested poor roads |
| National Contextual Factors | Macroeconomy | Jobs growth | Jobs decrease |
| | Regulation, including equalities and anti-discrimination policy | Effective legislation to encourage labour mobility (e.g. employment equality) | Ineffective or no legislation |
| | Welfare and institutional factors | Measures to support spatial mobility and transitions into work | Weak labour market and welfare policy |
| | Employment Policy | Measure to support spatial mobility and transitions into work | Weak labour market and welfare policy |

For any individual, mobility is determined by the interaction of a wide range of factors. The most mobile individuals will benefit from a combination of the attributes and circumstances in the third column of Table 3.2. The least mobile individuals will have a combination of attributes and circumstances described in the final column.

3.2.1 Individual factors

Demographic characteristics

- Single people are more geographically mobile.
- Young adults, especially those in their twenties, tend to be amongst the most likely to migrate, particularly those with higher level qualifications.
- The relationship between age and length of commute is less clear cut. It has been argued that travel-to-work time increases with age as older workers have a wider range of marketable skills, which enable them to search for work over a wider area. Other studies have found a negative relationship between age and length of commute, arguing that the accumulation of skills with age enables workers to compete more effectively for local jobs.
- Women have shorter commutes than men on average, although this may be explained by other individual factors (such as age, qualifications, experience); job characteristics (such as wages and occupational segregation); household characteristics (including access to a vehicle, and caring responsibilities); and local factors (such as public transport availability and geographical context).

Health and wellbeing

- Inactivity rates are higher amongst people with a disability. However, in Northern Ireland three-quarters of people with a disability with tertiary education are in employment, compared to one-third of people with a disability without qualifications⁶.
- In the Life Opportunities Survey⁷, people with a disability reported facing other barriers to employment, such as being more likely to have difficulties with transport; a lack of qualifications and skills; and suffering from anxiety and a lack of confidence.

Economic position and work history

- There tends to be more movement between the lower end of the earnings distribution and subsequent non-employment.
- Poor early labour market experience amongst young people (which tends to be particularly apparent in a recessionary period) can have a 'scarring' effect, perhaps characterised by 'churning' between low paid employment and non-employment.
- Full-time employment is consistently associated with longer commutes than part-time employment.
- Experience of unemployment increases the likelihood of geographic mobility.

Frame of reference

- Frames of reference are shaped by previous experience and personal goals. Research on international migration has highlighted the role played by different frames of reference amongst migrants and indigenous workers in explaining variations in willingness to take jobs at the lower end of the labour market.
- An individual's belief in their ability to achieve goals can influence labour market status mobility. Individuals who believe they may be discriminated against by employers, or who

⁶ McQuaid R., Graham H., Shapira M. and Raeside R. (2013) DELNI Economic Inactivity Strategy: Literature Review Project, Final Report to the Department for Education and Learning Northern Ireland, available at: <http://www.delni.gov.uk/economic-inactivity-literature-review.pdf>

⁷ The Life Opportunities Survey, Office for Disability issues, available at: <http://odi.dwp.gov.uk/disability-statistics-and-research/life-opportunities-survey.php>

believe there are no jobs available are likely to have greater difficulty finding and sustaining employment.

- Previous experience of geographic mobility increases the likelihood of inter-regional mobility.

Labour market and job-seeking knowledge

- Employed job seekers are more likely to use the internet for job search than those in other economic status categories. Those who are least likely to use the internet for job search include older people and those without qualifications.
- As job advertising evolves, those with poor or out-of-date job seeking knowledge and advice are likely to be disadvantaged in terms of labour market status mobility.
- 'Newcomers' (especially international migrants) are most likely to lack job seeking knowledge and are more likely to end up in less skilled occupations for which they are over-qualified.

Skills and attributes

- People with no qualifications are less likely to be in employment than those with higher level qualifications, particularly in depressed local labour markets.
- Jobs demanding higher-level skills are open only to people with higher-level skills, whilst low-skill jobs are open to people with all skills levels. At the same time, some higher-skill individuals are happy to remain in jobs for which they are over-qualified, for example if it enables them to work in a certain location, or if they prefer a job with a lower degree of stress and pressure. This means the lower-skilled have a smaller pool of jobs available to them than the higher skilled.
- Geographic mobility is positively associated with the level of education and occupation. Reasons for this may include pay differentials (longer journeys are more worthwhile the higher the rate of pay), or a lack of local opportunities for higher level jobs. Low rates of pay in less skilled jobs mean it is often not worth commuting a long distance to work in a lower skill job, leaving individuals with poor skills more reliant on local opportunities.

3.2.2 Individual circumstances

Household circumstances

- Parental background exerts a strong influence on educational attainment and earnings in employment suggesting that inter-generational mobility in employment is limited.
- Caring responsibilities affect employment decisions: there is a negative relationship between hours spent caring and the probability of being in paid employment.
- Where there are dependent children in the household, women tend to commute less and men tend to commute more, reflecting uneven caring responsibilities within households.

Access to resources

- Access to private transport opens up possibilities for wider job search, while dependence on public transport restricts geographical search areas (and potential working hours). In some cases a 'catch-22' of 'no car, no job; no job, no car' may prevail.
- Car access is particularly important in rural areas. Residents of small towns and rural areas were willing to commute for longer than those in large urban areas.
- Social networks of friends and family can have positive or negative effects on labour mobility as young people, in particular, may be encouraged or discouraged to pursue labour market opportunities.

- Some individuals, especially low income parents in insecure jobs, may be tied to local opportunities because of reliance on informal social networks for support with caring responsibilities. In such cases, social networks ultimately enable labour market status mobility from non-employment to employment. The flexibility associated with this informal childcare may also facilitate longer commutes.

3.2.3 Employer practices

Recruitment and selection practices

- Actual or perceived discrimination can reduce labour market mobility from non-employment to employment. Such (perceived) discrimination may be on grounds including disability, age, ethnicity, or area of residence.

Working practices

- At the lower end of the labour market, job seekers may be seeking permanent full-time jobs, whereas many of those that are available are part-time and/or temporary. A mismatch between employment supply and demand may therefore act as a barrier to labour market status mobility.
- Flexible working hours are often sought, particularly by those with caring responsibilities, but may not be available and act as a barrier to the uptake of work.
- In rural areas, the size structure of businesses tends to be more skewed towards small businesses. Public administration is less well represented in rural areas. This means there is likely to be a reduced emphasis on formal training, which may inhibit labour market status mobility.
- Issues relating to poor public transport and remoteness underlie a greater share of hard-to-fill vacancies in rural than in urban areas.

3.2.4 Local contextual factors

Quantity and quality of local jobs

- A lack of local jobs and poor quality jobs might impinge on both labour market status mobility and geographic mobility.
- Commuting is more likely to be the preferred mode of geographic mobility in metropolitan regions vis-à-vis other regions.
- For low quality jobs, low pay can represent a barrier to the uptake of employment. This suggests financial incentives could help facilitate the transition to employment for those already contemplating employment.

Local work culture and local labour market operation and norms

- Neighbourhood norms and attitudes towards paid work and other aspects of socio-economic life have been shown to impact upon individuals' and households' behaviour.
- Some individuals and households have strong place attachment and tend to look inwards to the immediate locality for opportunities. This directly influences geographic mobility and can limit prospects for labour market status mobility.
- Specifically within Northern Ireland, religious background can also play a role in labour mobility – the 'chill factor'.

Local infrastructure

- Where people live influences access to transport infrastructure, education, training, employment opportunities and the personal horizons they may have.

- Individuals in accessible locations with a good transport infrastructure are better placed to travel to a range of opportunities than those in more peripheral locations with a poorer transport infrastructure.

3.2.5 National contextual factors

- Those individuals who are most disadvantaged in the labour market at the 'end of the queue' and are particularly unlikely to find employment in an economic downturn.
- The workings of the benefits system, conditionality rules and factors supporting labour market participation impact on job search decisions. The perceived risk of low wage or temporary employment mean the non-employed are sometimes reluctant to accept work (the 'benefit trap').
- The provision of care, and support with the costs of care, are important, particularly with regards to childcare.

3.3 Evidence presented in subsequent sections of this study

The literature review has provided a comprehensive account of the evidence on labour mobility. Some of the issues highlighted above have more relevance to Northern Ireland than others. Some are of more interest when considering either geographic or labour market status mobility. Some lend themselves more easily to the various types of qualitative and quantitative research undertaken for this study. For these reasons, not all of the drivers of mobility identified above are discussed in every section of this report. Table 3.3, below, summarises where evidence is presented against each of the drivers of mobility in this study.

Table 3.3: Summary of evidence presented in this study

| Groups | Drivers | Evidence presented in report | | | |
|------------------------------------|---|---|--------------------------------------|--|--------------------------------------|
| | | Literature review summary (Section 3.2) | Geographic mobility (Sections 4 & 5) | Labour market status mobility (Sections 6 & 7) | Telephone survey results (Section 9) |
| Individual Factors | Demographic characteristics | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| | Health and wellbeing | ✓ | | ✓ | ✓ |
| | Economic position and work history | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| | Frame of reference | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | |
| | Labour market and job seeking knowledge | ✓ | | ✓ | ✓ |
| | Skills and attributes | ✓ | | | ✓ |
| Individual Circumstances | Household circumstances | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| | Access to resources | ✓ | ✓ | | ✓ |
| Employer Practices | Recruitment and selection practices | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| | Working practices | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | |
| Local Contextual Factors | Quantity and quality of local jobs | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| | Local work culture (chill factor) | ✓ | ✓ | | ✓ |
| | Local labour market operation and norms | ✓ | | | |
| | Local infrastructure | ✓ | ✓ | | |
| National Contextual Factors | Macroeconomy | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | |
| | Regulation, including equalities and anti-discrimination policy | ✓ | | ✓ | |
| | Welfare and institutional factors | ✓ | | ✓ | ✓ |
| | Employment Policy | ✓ | | | |

4 Current extent of geographic labour mobility in Northern Ireland

Key findings

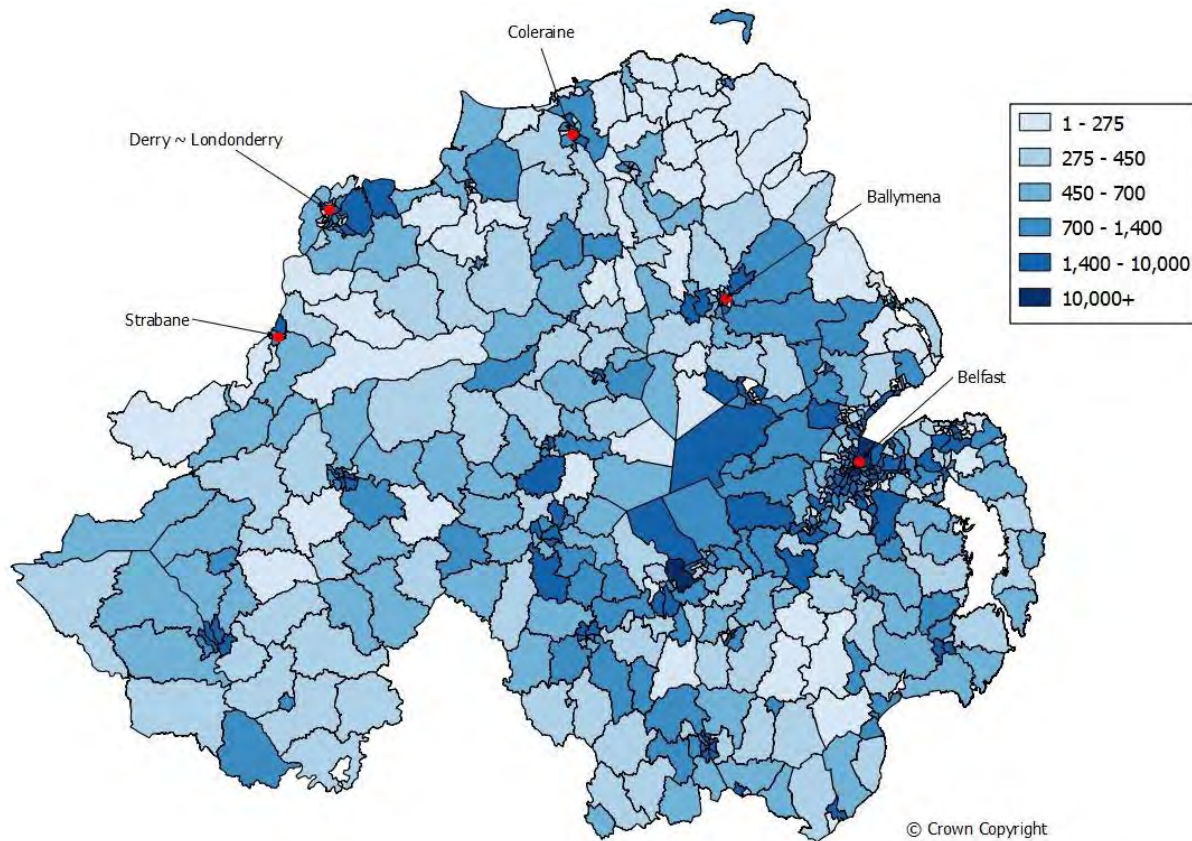
- The Northern Ireland labour market is characterised by an east-west divide. Employment is most densely concentrated in the east of the country, particularly in and around Belfast. There are fewer employment opportunities in the west of Northern Ireland, which has the greatest concentrations of non-employed labour.
- Distance is an important barrier to employment in the west of Northern Ireland. There are also concentrations of non-employment in Belfast, where perceptions or non-spatial barriers to employment are likely to be more significant.
- House moves are not an effective labour market adjustment mechanism in Northern Ireland: fewer people move house than in other parts of the UK, and most moves within Northern Ireland tend to be within the same local area.
- Average commuting times in Northern Ireland are similar to other parts of the UK outside London.
- Northern Ireland is extremely car dependent and few people travel to work by public transport.

4.1 Distribution of employment within Northern Ireland

Figure 4.1 shows the number of jobs in each ward in Northern Ireland. Employment is clearly concentrated in and around Belfast, with smaller employment centres in other towns and cities, notably Derry~Londonderry. Despite policies attempting to decentralise employment, a clear east / west divide remains. There are significantly fewer employment opportunities in the west and south of Northern Ireland.

Figure 4.1 Employee jobs, workplace-based, 2011

Darker areas indicate employment centres



Source: Northern Ireland Census of Employment 2011

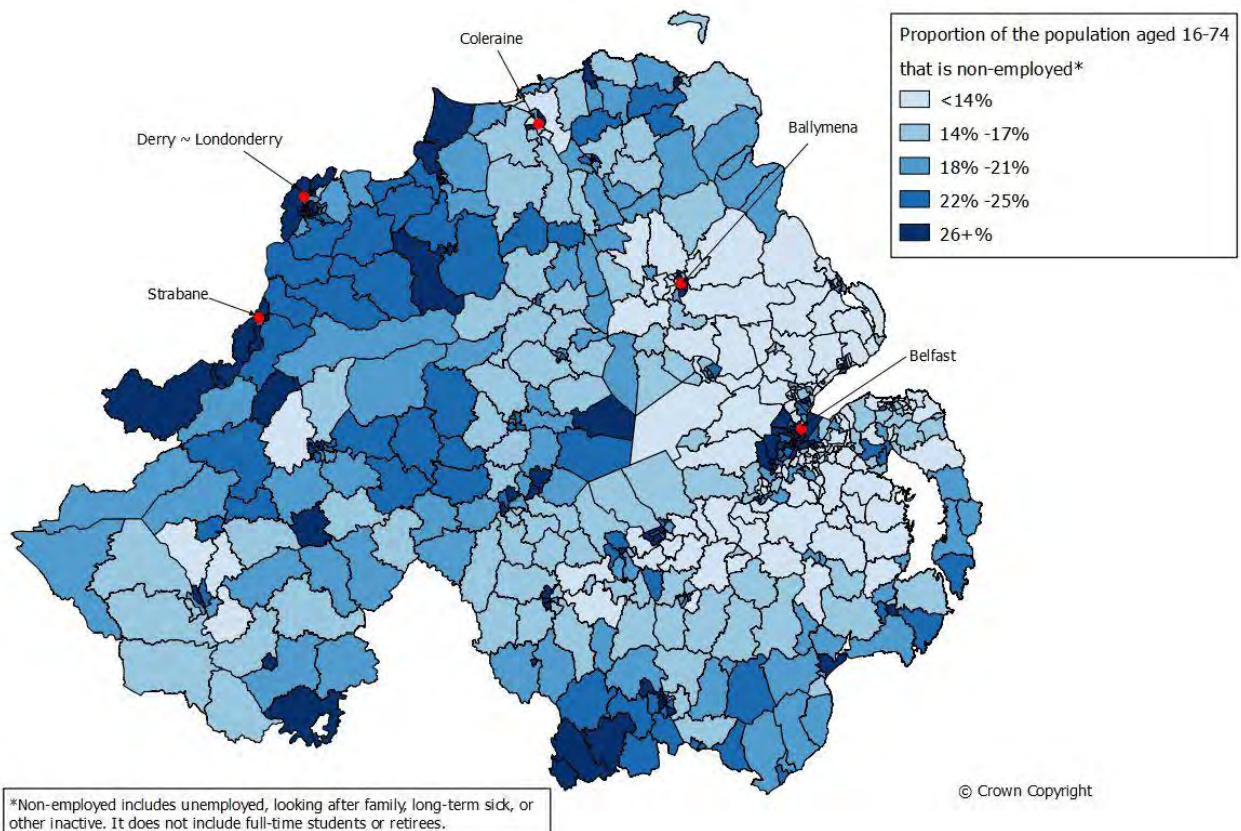
4.2 Distribution of available labour within Northern Ireland

Figure 4.1 identified the locations where there are concentrations of employment, or where there is demand for labour. It is also useful to identify where there are concentrations of people not currently in work who could potentially move into jobs - the supply of available labour (Figure 4.2).

In total, there were 222,000 non-employed people in Northern Ireland in 2011. 146,000 of these were in the east of Northern Ireland and 76,000 were in the west⁸. This means that 21 per cent of the working age population is non-employed in the west, compared to 18 per cent in the east.

Figure 4.2: Proportion of the population aged 16-74 that is non-employed, 2011

Darker areas indicate higher rate of non-employment



Source: 2011 Census

Despite being close to employment centres, there are concentrations of non-employment in Belfast. In such areas, distance is unlikely to be the main barrier to employment. In contrast, Figure 4.2 shows that many rural areas in the west of Northern Ireland have high non-employment rates and we know from Figure 4.1 that these are remote from employment centres. In such areas distance is likely to represent a significant barrier to employment.

⁸ The west of Northern Ireland figure is taken to include the following local government districts: Armagh, Coleraine, Cookstown, Derry, Dungannon, Fermanagh, Limavady, Magherafelt, Omagh and Strabane. All other local government districts are included in the east of Northern Ireland figure.

This initial analysis suggests barriers to work may differ between urban and rural areas. Perceptions or non-spatial barriers are likely to be important in urban areas, while simple distance may be the principle barrier in rural areas.

Of course, distance need not be a barrier to employment to the extent that workers are geographically mobile. That is, if they are willing and able to commute or move to a different region to secure work. The next two sub-sections consider the extent to which this is the case.

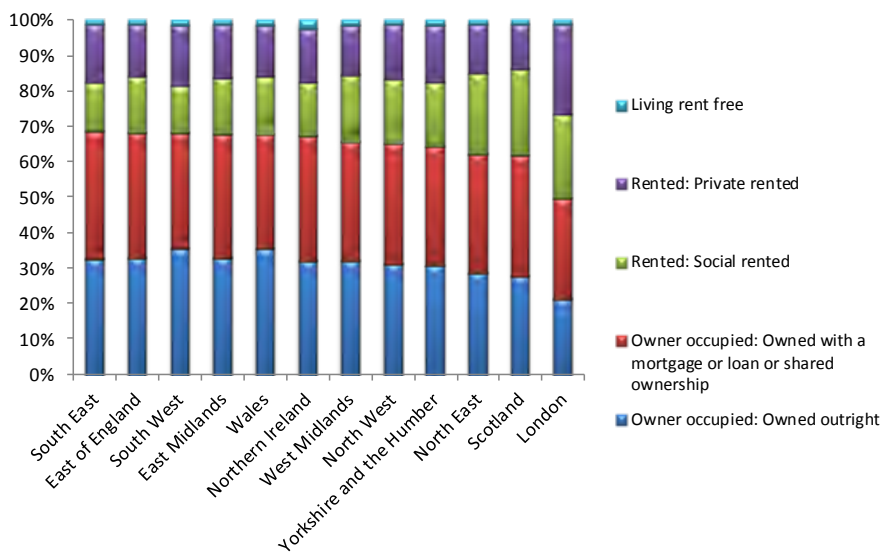
4.3 Geographic labour mobility through longer-distance moves

68 per cent of households in Northern Ireland are owner occupied (either owned outright or with a mortgage, loan or as part of a shared ownership arrangement). This is marginally above the average of 66 per cent for the UK excluding London (Figure 4.3.1). A higher rate of home ownership may be associated with a lower degree of geographical mobility, since it may take home owners more time to move to another area. They may also be less inclined to move if they have invested time and money in their home.

Mobility may also be lower for those living in social rented accommodation. Shortages of social housing in some areas mean that those who rent social housing are often unwilling or unable to move due to the difficulty of finding an equivalent property in their new location. In Northern Ireland, 15 per cent of households live in social rented accommodation, slightly below the average of 17 per cent for the UK excluding London.

On balance, the household tenure mix is very similar in Northern Ireland to the rest of the UK, and there is no reason to believe that this alone inhibits geographical labour mobility.

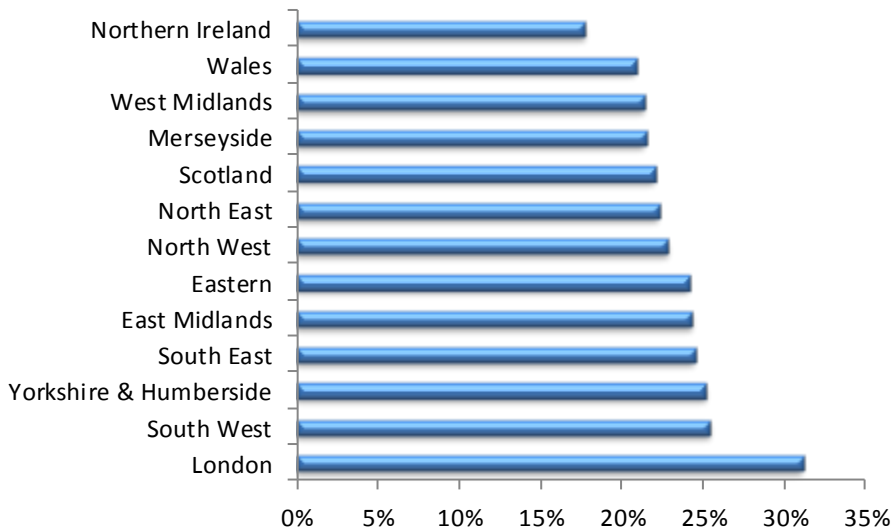
Figure 4.3.1: Regional household tenure, 2011



Source: 2011 Census

Very few data sources are available on house moves within Northern Ireland. However, some insight can be gained from the Labour Force Survey (LFS), which includes a variable to identify the number of people who have moved house during the last three years. Figure 4.3.2 presents this information for regions of the UK, and shows that only 18 per cent of people in Northern Ireland have moved house in the last three years. This is by far the lowest proportion in the comparison, suggesting that people in Northern Ireland have been the least mobile in the UK in recent years.

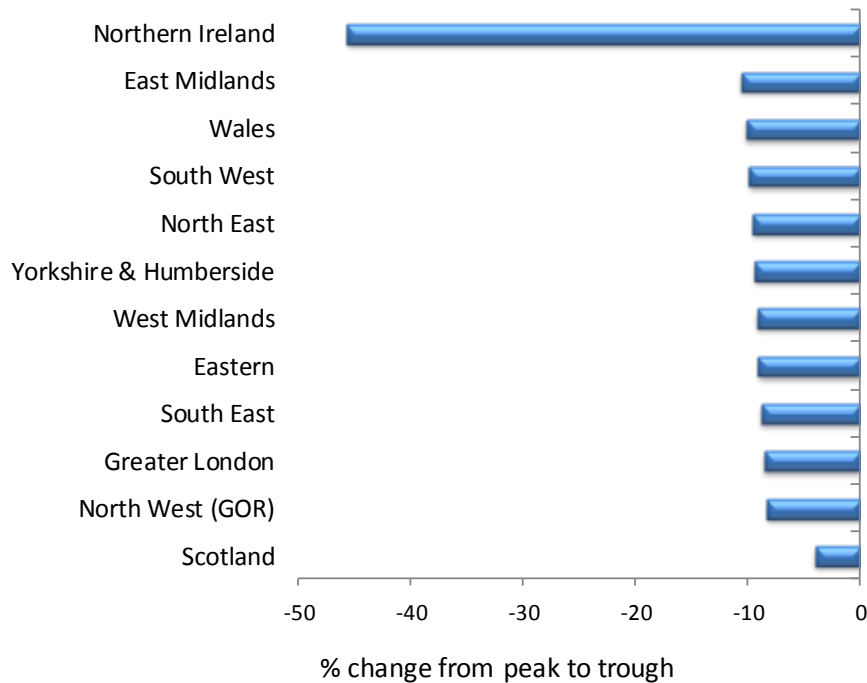
Figure 4.3.2: Proportion of the of population aged 16+ who have moved house during the last three years, 2012



Source: Labour Force Survey, Oxford Economics

The recession and housing market downturn have been particularly severe in Northern Ireland. Average house prices fell from £225,000 in 2007 to £122,000 in 2013, a decrease of 46 per cent (Figure 4.3.3). This proportionate change is far in excess of the falls experienced in other UK regions. As a result, negative equity may have been a more important factor in preventing house moves in Northern Ireland during the last few years than in other parts of the UK.

Figure 4.3.3: Change in house prices from pre-recession peak year to trough year

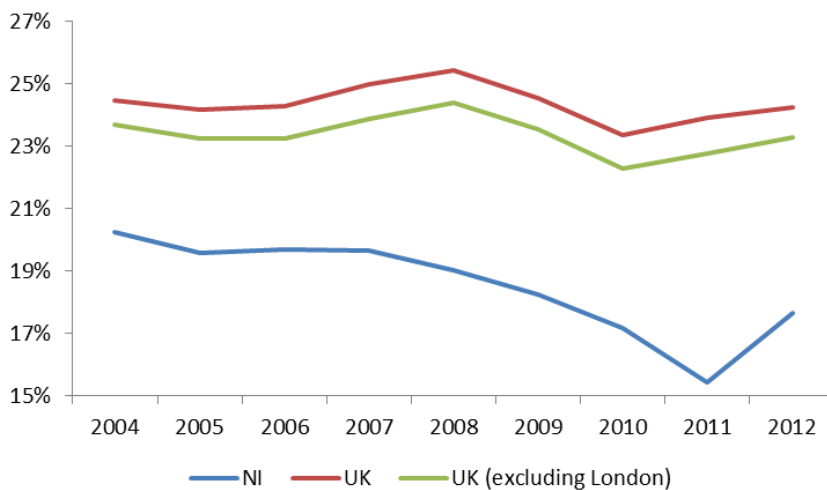


Source: Oxford Economics Regional Economic Database

Nonetheless, Figure 4.3.4 suggests the proportion of recent house-movers within the population aged 16+ in Northern Ireland was well below the UK average before the recession took grip in 2008.

More anecdotally, the West Belfast JBO staff reported that they had never heard of anyone moving house to take up work, and that the unemployed people they come into contact with often expect to work close to their home. Similarly, the Derry~Londonderry based JBO staff confirmed that they rarely work with a claimant who is willing to move in order to obtain work. They noted that it can sometimes be difficult to encourage some individuals to commute within the city, never mind to move house. Those who are younger and more qualified, particularly those with a higher education qualification tend to view the prospect of seeking work outside Derry~Londonderry more positively. JC staff in Strabane expressed similar views, again suggesting that only those who are young and highly qualified may be open to the prospect of moving house.

Figure 4.3.4: Proportion of the population aged 16+ who have moved house during the last three years, 2004 to 2012



Source: Labour Force Survey, Oxford Economics

It is not possible to estimate the distance of moves from LFS data, but other research suggests that most moves within Northern Ireland are relatively local. Shuttleworth *et al.* find the median house move distance between 2001 and 2007 was only 3.58km. Very few people move further than 20km⁹. Similarly, the Registrar General Northern Ireland Annual Report 2006¹⁰ presents information on average move distance, based on the Northern Ireland Longitudinal Study. Taking a weighted average of these data suggests an average move distance of four miles between 2001 and 2006.

Table 4.3.1: Average distance moved within Northern Ireland, miles, 2001-2006

| Average distance of move, miles | | | | Percentage of moves | | | |
|---------------------------------|------------|------------|------------|---------------------|-----|------------|------------|
| | | Move to | | | | Move to | |
| | | Rural area | Urban area | | | Rural area | Urban area |
| Move from | Rural area | 2.3 | 16.4 | 23% | 4% | | |
| | Urban area | 15.1 | 2.9 | 6% | 67% | | |

Source: Registrar General Northern Ireland Annual Report 2006, tables 2.2. and 2.3

⁹ Shuttleworth I., Barr P. and Gould M. (2013) 'Does internal migration in Northern Ireland increase religious and social segregation? Perspectives from the Northern Ireland Longitudinal Study (NILS) 2001-2007', Population, Space and Place, 72-86.

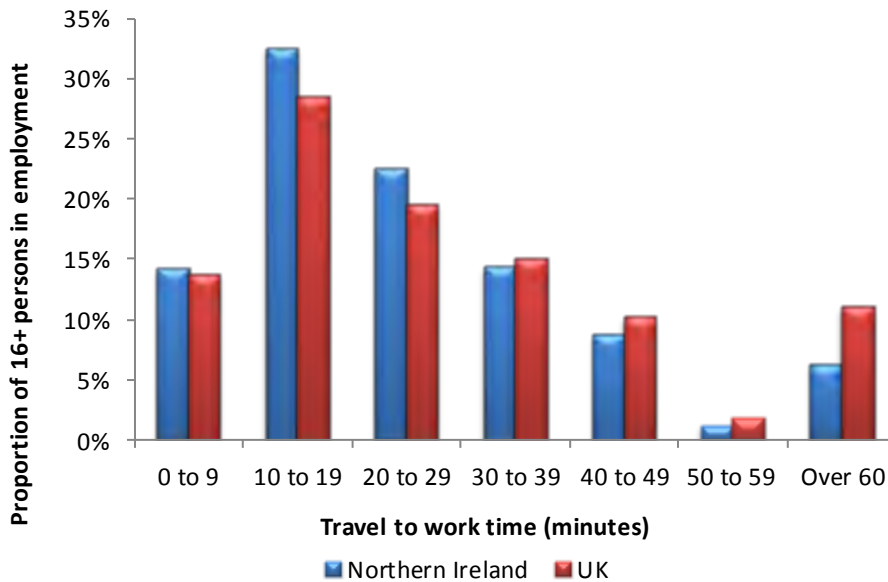
¹⁰ NISRA, 85 Annual Report of the Registrar General for NI 2006, can be downloaded from: <http://www.nisra.gov.uk/demography/default.asp132.htm>

Taking this evidence together suggests regional migration within Northern Ireland is unlikely to be an effective labour market adjustment mechanism. The short average distance of moves suggests people primarily move for non-work reasons.

4.4 Geographic labour mobility through daily commuting

It is possible to gain insight into average commuting times using LFS data. Figure 4.4.1 shows that 47 per cent of people in Northern Ireland have a commute of less than 20 minutes, compared to the national average of 42 per cent. In contrast, eight per cent of people in Northern Ireland commute for 50 minutes or more, compared to 13 per cent in the UK as a whole.

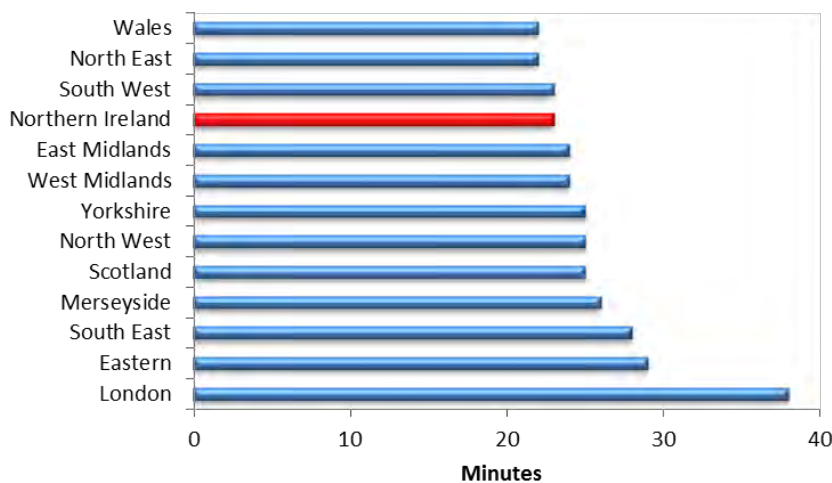
Figure 4.4.1: Estimated average travel to work time, Northern Ireland –v- UK, 2012



Source: Oxford Economics, Labour Force Survey

While average commutes are shorter in time in Northern Ireland than in the UK overall, the national average is inflated by the situation in London, where housing costs and availability lead to long commutes for many of those working in the capital. Figure 4.4.2 shows that average commuting times in Northern Ireland are very similar to other UK regions outside London. The average commute time in Northern Ireland is 23 minutes, compared to 22 minutes in Wales.

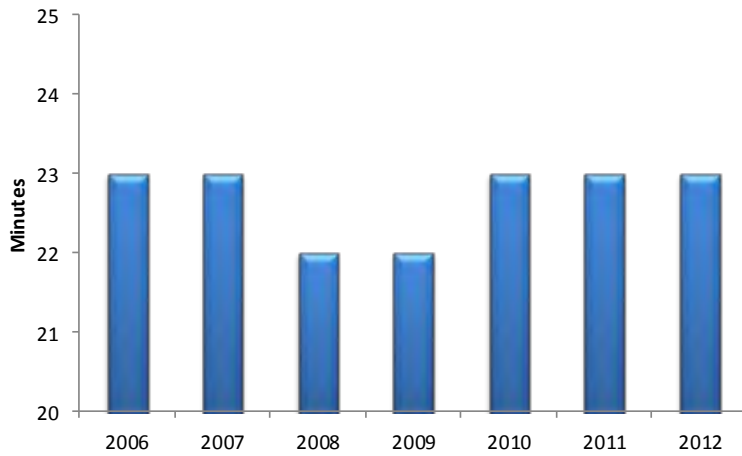
Figure 4.4.2: Average travel to work time, all UK regions, 2012



Source: Labour Force Survey, Oxford Economics

The average travel to work time in Northern Ireland has stayed relatively stable since the current data series began in 2006 (see Figure 4.4.3).

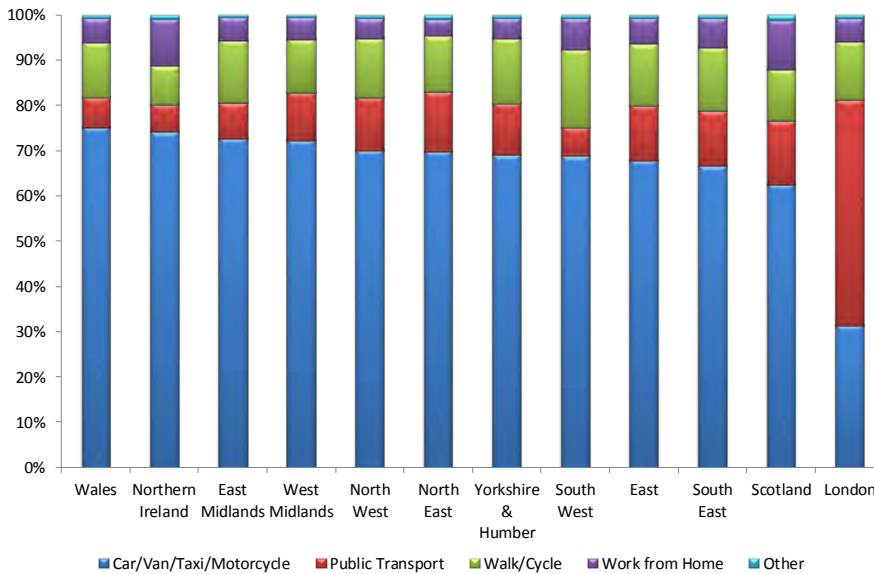
Figure 4.4.3: Average travel to work time in Northern Ireland, 2006 to 2012



Source: Labour Force Survey, Oxford Economics

Amongst UK regions, Northern Ireland has the second highest proportion of people travelling to work by car, van, taxi or motorcycle (74 per cent). Just six per cent of people travel to work using public transport, the lowest amongst all regions (see Figure 4.4.4).

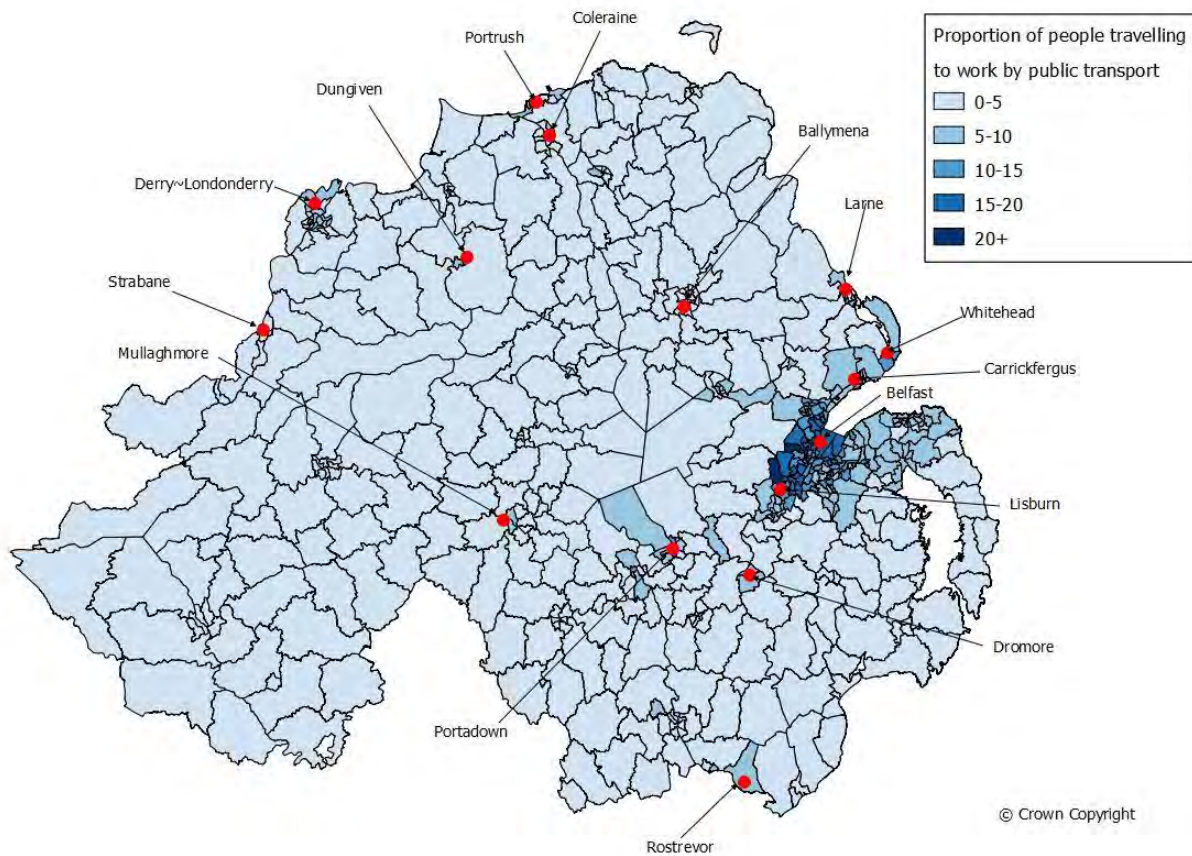
Figure 4.4.4: Mode of transport to work, 2011



Source: Census 2011

As would be expected, the highest concentrations of public transport commuters are found in the urban areas, particularly Belfast, where provision is greater than in rural areas (see Figure 4.4.5).

Figure 4.4.5: Proportion of workers commuting by public transport, 2011



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Source: 2011 Census

5 Drivers of geographic labour mobility in Northern Ireland

Key findings

- The drivers of geographical mobility in Northern Ireland are in line with those identified in the broader literature. Younger people, males and the more highly skilled tend to be more mobile.
- For the non-employed, the main barriers to geographical mobility are travel costs relative to salary; an unwillingness to move away from their local area; a lack of car access; and the availability of public transport.
- Transport barriers to employment are greater in rural areas, although transport provision can also discourage individuals from taking jobs in parts of Belfast that are not served by direct transport links from their area of residence.
- The 'chill factor' is not an issue for the majority of the population. Over 70 per cent of people would not be concerned about applying for a job in an area dominated by people of the opposite religious background.
- However, consultation evidence suggests the chill factor still affects some individuals in urban areas, particularly Belfast:
 - Within Belfast, some of the non-employed identified certain parts of the city they would feel unsafe working in. Other stakeholders reported that chill remains a real issue amongst young men from certain working class areas who are unwilling to work outside of their 'comfort zone'. The situation may have regressed over the last year due to flag protests and associated events.
 - In Derry~Londonderry JBO staff also reported that someone might very occasionally be reluctant to take a job in a particular area, but it was not always clear whether this was based on a genuine concern.
 - JBO staff in Ballymena reported that while individuals in the town were not reluctant to travel to any particular areas, some might still be reluctant to take a job in a workplace dominated by workers from the opposite religious background.
 - In Strabane Job Centre staff noted that the chill factor is seldom, if at all, used as justification for not taking a job.
- Based on Oxford Economics' forecasts, few areas in Northern Ireland are expected to see employment growth in excess of working age population growth between 2008 and 2024. Nonetheless, Belfast and Derry~Londonderry will need to 'import' more workers from elsewhere in Northern Ireland, either through increased commuting or migration. Job prospects in many rural areas are unlikely to improve and could actually worsen in many cases. The need for geographical mobility within Northern Ireland will therefore increase going forward.

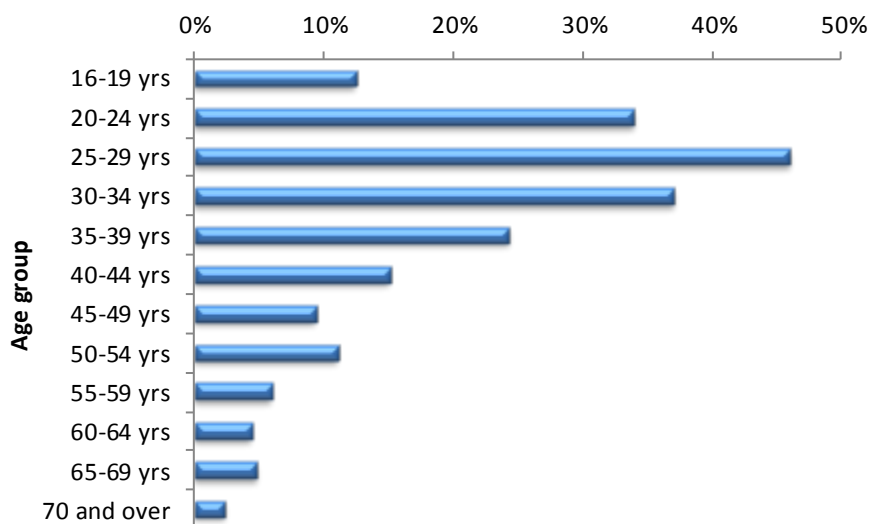
5.1 Individual factors and circumstances

5.1.1 Demographic characteristics

Figure 5.1.1a suggests that, within Northern Ireland, people are most likely to move house in their twenties and early thirties, perhaps when they are leaving their parents' home, or are more willing to move to another area to establish their career.

The Strabane Job Centre staff reported that young people are generally much more willing to move to take up work, but this is less of an option for older workers who have a family and house to look after. However, the cost of living may also be consideration, even for young people. A minimum wage job will yield the same wage in Strabane as in Belfast, but the cost of living is much lower in Strabane.

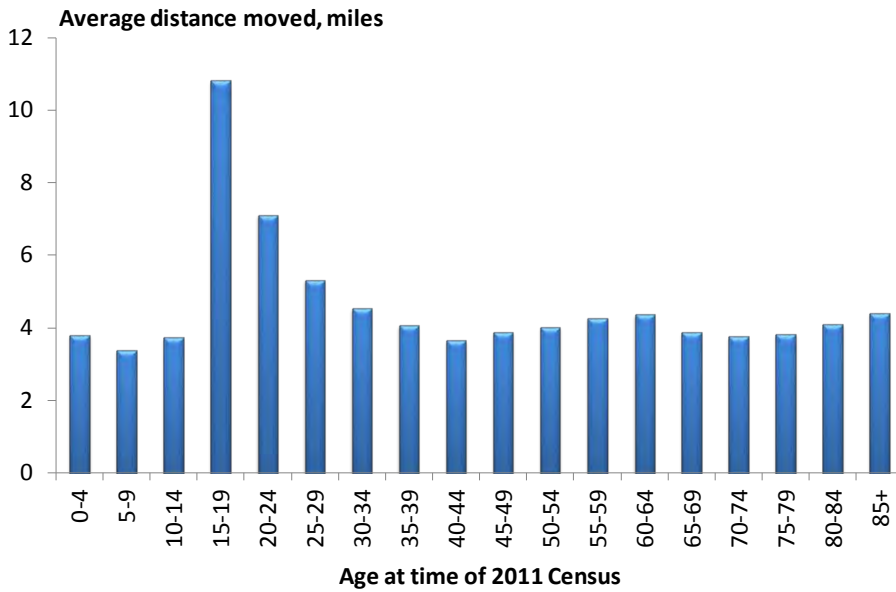
Figure 5.1.1a: Estimated proportion of people who have moved house within the last three years, Northern Ireland, 2012



Source: Oxford Economics, Labour Force Survey

Information from the Northern Ireland Longitudinal Study provides an analysis of the distance of move by age group (Figure 5.1.1b). This shows a similar, though slightly more polarised situation to that presented in Figure 5.1.1a. The average move distance is reasonably stable after the age of 40, and the longest distance moved tends to be amongst those aged 20. The pattern for young people may reflect moves to university, or away to an urban area to take up work. The Youth Council noted that in some cases moving from a rural to urban area can create challenges for a young person. Previously, it may have been relatively easy for them to pick up flexible and informal employment relatively easily in their home town, but they find it hard to gain work in an urban area where those same skills may not be valued.

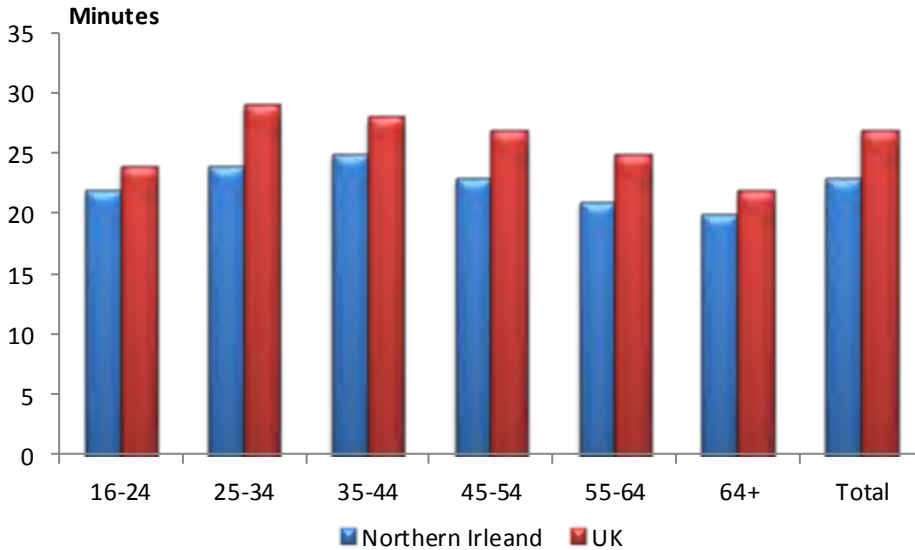
Figure 5.1.1b: Average distance moved within Northern Ireland; 2001-2006 moves, by age at time of 2001 Census



Source: Registrar General Northern Ireland Annual Report 2006, Figure 2.11

Turning to daily commutes, the average daily commute in Northern Ireland takes 23 minutes, compared to the UK average of 27 minutes. Within Northern Ireland average commuting time peaks within the 35-44 age group, and declines for people in older age bands.

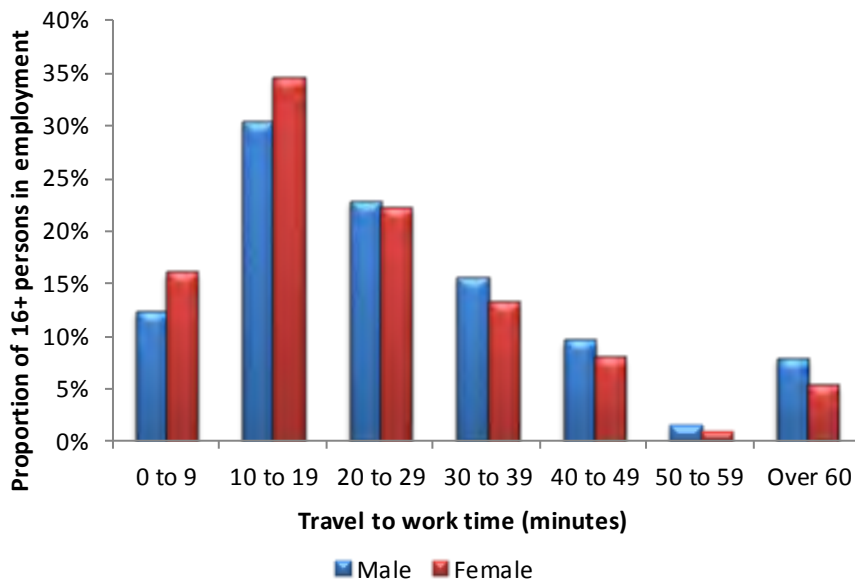
Figure 5.1.1c: Average travel to work time by age of those aged 16+ in employment, 2012



Source: Labour Force Survey, Oxford Economics

In line with previous research, females in Northern Ireland have a shorter commute on average than males (21 minutes compared to 25 minutes). Figure 5.1.1d shows that larger proportions of females than males have very short commutes of up to 20 minutes, perhaps reflecting that females are more likely to be combining a daytime job with childcare commitments.

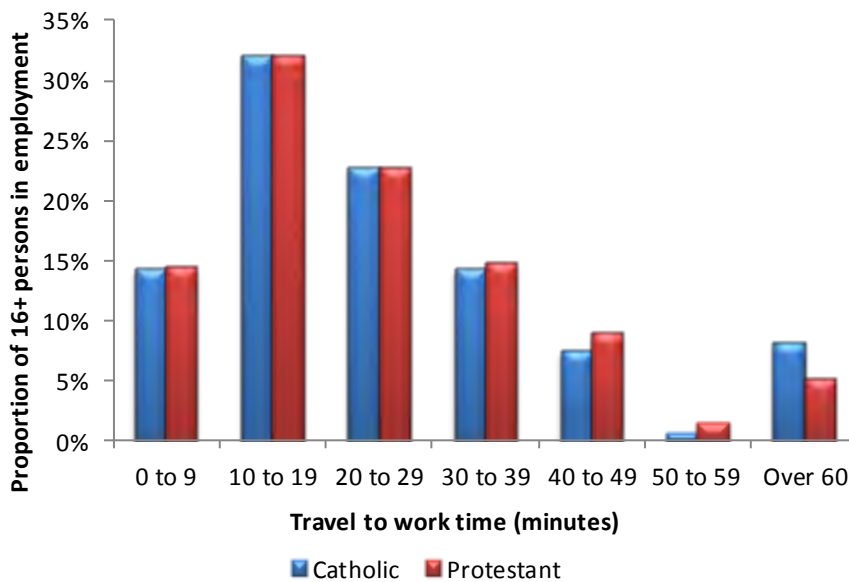
Figure 5.1.1d: Estimated average travel to work time by gender, Northern Ireland, 2012



Source: Oxford Economics, Labour Force Survey

Figure 5.1.1e presents data on average travel to work time by religious background. For most age bands there is very little difference, although a slightly higher proportion of Catholic workers travel for more than an hour to get to work. In contrast, a slightly higher proportion of Protestant workers travel for between 40 and 59 minutes.

Figure 5.1.1e: Estimated average travel to work time by religious background, Northern Ireland, 2012



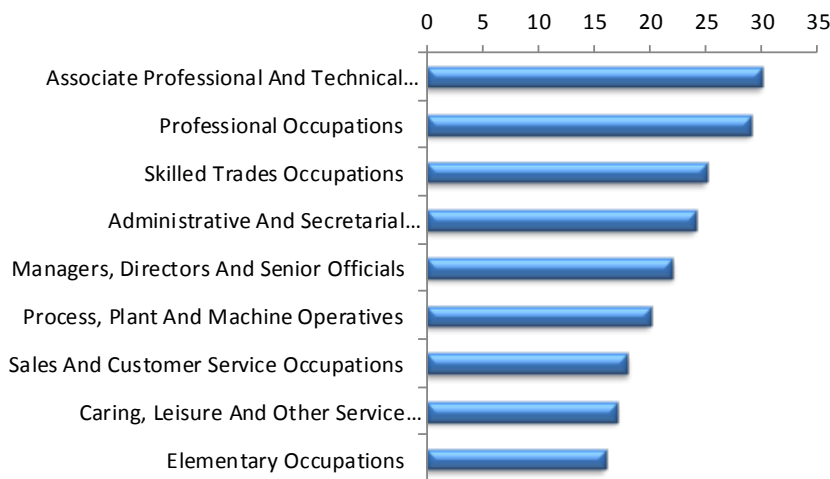
Source: Oxford Economics, Labour Force Survey

5.1.2 Economic position and work history

In line with previous research, those in higher-skill occupations tend to have longer commutes. The average journey to work for those in associate professional and technical occupations is 30 minutes. In contrast, for those in elementary occupations it is just 16 minutes.

This evidence makes intuitive sense, given that a longer journey will only be economically viable in a higher-paid occupation. The stakeholder consultations yielded further insight. For example, Gingerbread NI highlighted that those with higher skills tend to have larger search areas (although lone parents are often limited to seeking work close to home because of childcare needs regardless of skills). The Derry~Londonderry JBO staff observed that higher skilled people have often been away to university and tend to see moving away or commuting more positively. In some cases people recognise the kind of work they are seeking is not available within Derry~Londonderry, particularly if it is graduate-type employment. They also noted that tradesmen (reflected in the 'skilled trades group in Figure 5.1.2a) are also more willing to work further afield at present, reflecting the more limited construction opportunities within Derry~Londonderry itself.

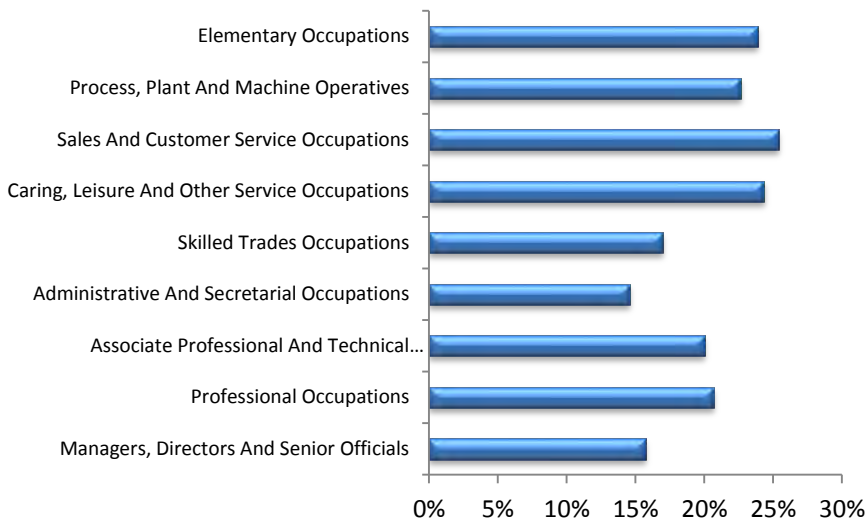
Figure 5.1.2a: Average travel to work time by occupation in minutes, Northern Ireland, 2012



Source: Labour Force Survey, Oxford Economics

Similar analysis for the proportion of people who have moved house in the last three years yields a less clear trend, although in this case it tends to be those in lower skilled occupations who are more likely to have moved house (Figure 5.1.2b). This may reflect that those who are lower paid may be younger (and therefore more mobile), or may be more likely to be renting accommodation.

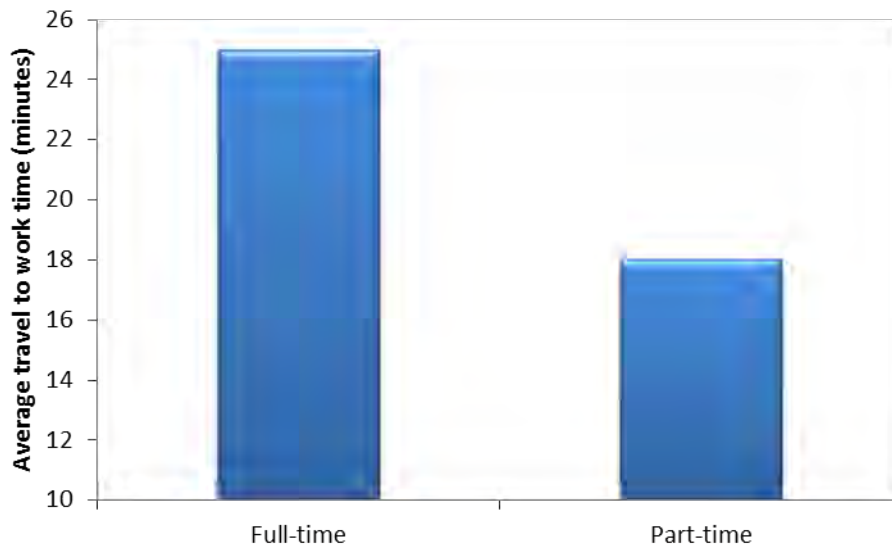
Figure 5.1.2b: Proportion of people who have moved house in the last three years, by occupation, Northern Ireland, 2012



Source: Labour Force Survey, Oxford Economics

Figure 5.1.2c shows that full-time employees tend to commute further on average than part-time employees (Figure 5.1.2c).

Figure 5.1.2c: Average travel to work time by work status, Northern Ireland, 2012



Source: Labour Force Survey, Oxford Economics

The focus group participants confirmed that when deciding how far they were willing to travel to work, they would typically compare the cost of travel to their salary expectations. However, as most individuals at this end of the labour market would typically be earning very low wages (the Strabane Job Centre staff suggested around £200 at most), in most cases they will be better off on benefits if they have to spend more than a minimal amount on travelling to work:

“Distance is not the important thing; it’s just the cost of travelling for me” (Derry~Londonderry)

“I wouldn’t travel all the way to Belfast for a job that I could be doing here for the same money because of the cost of travel” (Strabane)

The Derry~Londonderry JBO staff echoed this point, noting that someone working 16 hours a week in Limavady would earn about the same amount of money as they would spend on travel costs. They also noted that people who have travelled in the past, particularly to go to university, do not see commuting or moving to another area as a barrier to employment. People who have only lived in the local area generally are not keen to work elsewhere.

These observations are very much in line with previous academic work. Shuttleworth and Green (2011)¹¹ and Shuttleworth et al. (2008)¹² note that benefit claimants were more likely to express a willingness to travel further if they had had above average commutes in earlier jobs, if they had shorter times on benefits, if they had cars, and if they lived in rural areas. They were also more likely to have a more positive attitude towards employment than those who appeared to have more localised horizons.

The evidence presented above is also consistent with the findings of Shuttleworth et al. (2005)¹³ who found that former Harland & Wolff workers with cars, and in higher-grade occupations, had longer commutes and were more likely to travel further to subsequent jobs. The importance of educational qualifications was also apparent.

Gingerbread NI noted that transport can be a particular issue for lone parents. For those who need to drop off a child at childcare on the way to work, the time and expense of using public transport is often prohibitive. At the same time, parents are finding they have to travel longer distances for childcare. Taken together, transport can be a significant barrier to employment for lone parents who do not have access to a car.

5.1.3 Frame of reference and attitudes

From the stakeholder interviews there was widespread agreement that the willingness to travel to take up work depended largely on the attitude of the individual. For example, Disability Action noted that if an individual is interested in finding employment they will look for it. However, some people with disabilities may need additional support and encouragement to help them into employment.

Supported Employment Solutions noted that expectations often differ in different types of area. In particular, those in urban areas often expect to have everything they need on their doorstep, including work opportunities.

The Institute for Conflict Research reported that within more troubled neighbourhoods, people are likely to seek jobs locally. Lives tend to be more localised and tightly defined and overall horizons are narrowed.

It is not just the attitude of the individual that is important – those in wider society and amongst employers are also important. Gingerbread NI have found that attitudes in Northern Ireland are somewhat more conservative than elsewhere in the UK and in some other European countries in relation to lone parents, women and certain job roles. This is particularly true in rural areas of Northern Ireland, where attitudes can be a greater barrier to labour mobility, a theme also identified

¹¹ Shuttleworth I. and Green A. (2011) 'Spatial mobility intentions, the labour market and Incapacity Benefit claimants: Evidence from Northern Ireland', available at: <http://usj.sagepub.com/content/48/5/911>

¹² Shuttleworth I., Green A. and Lloyd C. (2008) Survey Report: Incapacity Benefit Claimants, Geography, Households, Decision Making and Welfare Reform, DEL, Belfast, available at: http://www.delni.gov.uk/incapacity_benefit_survey_report.pdf

¹³ Shuttleworth I., Tyler P. and McKinstry D. (2005) 'Job loss, training and employability: What can we learn from the 2000 Harland and Wolff redundancy?'

by the Youth Council. However, lone parents tend to be more concentrated in urban areas where there is more access to childcare and support.

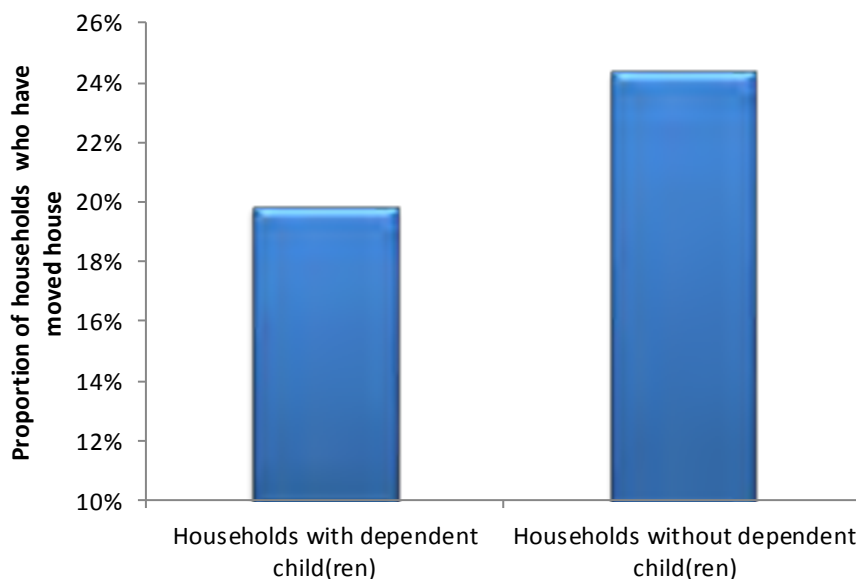
5.1.4 Household circumstances

Figure 5.1.4a suggests that those who have dependent children are less likely to have moved house during the last three years. This is in line with expectation, given that those with children may be unwilling to disrupt schooling with a house move or may rely on family for support with childcare.

Gingerbread NI noted that housing availability can be a further constraint, particularly for lone parents. 43 per cent of social housing houses a lone parent, compared to only 12 per cent taken up by a two parent family¹⁴. Difficulties in securing housing elsewhere may make it difficult to move to another area to take up work. The expense of moving can act as a further constraint on those with lower incomes.

Gingerbread NI also highlighted that life events based in the household can influence labour market mobility. For example, a relationship breakdown may lead to a need to move to a different area to be either near or away from family. In such situations, employment prospects are often a lower priority than safety, childcare and personal security.

Figure 5.1.4a: Proportion of households who have moved house in the last three years, Northern Ireland, 2012



Source: Labour Force Survey, Oxford Economics

At the focus groups participants indicated they would be unwilling or hesitant to relocate to another area within Northern Ireland, or to stay away from the home during the week, to secure employment. This generally stemmed from an unwillingness to leave family or friends, move children to a different school, or the difficulty of moving house when they have a mortgage on their current property. Typical responses included:

¹⁴ Gingerbread, Statistics, available at: <http://www.gingerbread.org.uk/content/365/Statistics>

“I have two children aged 5 and 10 so I wouldn’t even consider staying away from the house”
(Strabane)

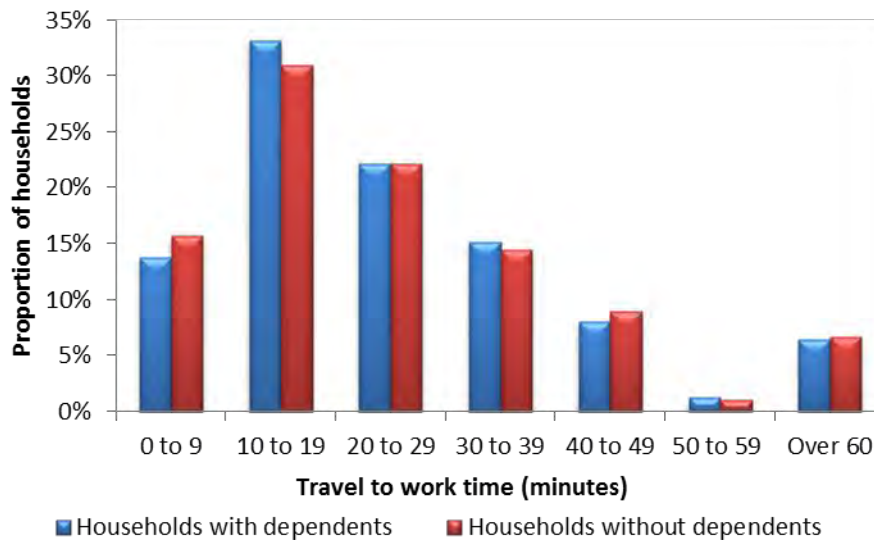
“It would mean totally uprooting and leaving all your friends behind. It would be a difficult choice”
(Coleraine)

Interestingly, younger focus group participants demonstrated an unwillingness or hesitancy towards relocating to secure employment because they felt settled within their respective home area. However, a number of the younger participants indicated that they would be prepared to relocate where the potential job opportunity matched their salary expectations and/or preferred hours of work:

“I would be prepared to move if it was an ideal job, with ideal hours” (Strabane)

The picture with regard to dependents is not clear cut in terms of daily commuting (Figure 5.1.4b), and may reflect a complex interaction of factors. Having children may limit geographical flexibility, but may also create a need to sustain a higher level of income which could involve a longer commute.

Figure 5.1.4b: Estimated average travel to work time in households with and without dependants, Northern Ireland, 2012

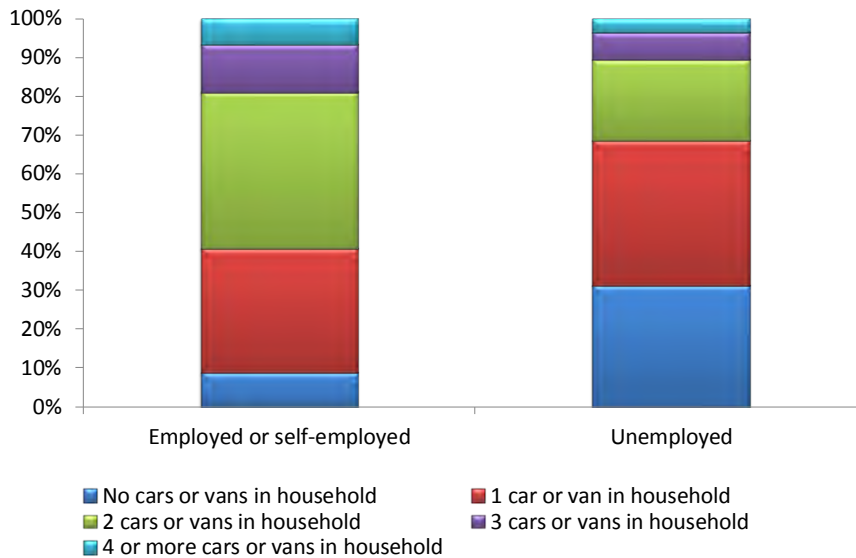


Source: Oxford Economics, Labour Force Survey

5.1.5 Access to resources

Figure 5.1.5 shows that 31 per cent of unemployed people have no cars or vans in their household, compared to just nine per cent of those who are employed or self-employed.

Figure 5.1.5: Car ownership by economic activity status



Source: Census 2011

Most focus group participants had limited access to a car. This meant they often had to look to public transport, which tends to service only the main towns and limits the geographic areas in which they can seek work. Consistent with previous research, participants highlighted the 'catch 22' situation that they could not afford a car unless they were in employment, but could not seek employment in many areas without a car. This was also highlighted by the Strabane Job Centre staff.

One focus group participant reported that the nature of positions she is applying for means car access is essential, but she is unable to afford insurance. She explained that after six months of unemployment she would be eligible for a short-term loan through the Jobs and Benefits Office. However, currently she is unable to access any support which is impinging her ability to apply for jobs.

Several participants, including those in Belfast, reported that access to, and the reliability and affordability of, public transport was a significant concern that affected their willingness to seek employment in neighbouring areas. They are more likely to apply for job opportunities within areas with good public transport:

"There is no point in getting half a dozen buses to get to somewhere because it takes ages and you can't always depend on them on a winter's morning" (Coleraine)

"If you were trying to get to Belfast for 7am, it is impossible. The first train gets into Belfast at 6.45am, so you have only 15 minutes to get to where you are going"
(Coleraine looking for employment in the security sector)

A number of participants highlighted the cost of attending interviews in neighbouring towns/cities:

"I take out money every fortnight to pay my keep and put petrol in the car to attend interviews, I know it is only £2 or £3, but that is £2 or £3 out of your daily budget. You only have £9 a day and you have to weigh these things up" (Coleraine)

“Maybe employers should take a step back as well, and appreciate the cost that people have incurred applying for these jobs” (Coleraine)

One of the participants indicated individuals are reimbursed for the cost of travel to and from interviews through the ‘Travel to Interview Scheme’. However, the reimbursement is calculated according to the price of public transportation, which is not always a viable mode of transport given the times and locations of interviews. This can mean the reimbursement is less than the actual costs incurred:

“It cost me £26 in both fuel and car parking and the job centre allowed me £15, which leaves me out of pocket” (Derry~Londonderry)

5.2 Employer practices

The situation described by employers was very much in line with the evidence presented above.

The Derry~Londonderry technology company reported that the geographical mobility of the labour force was closely related to skill levels. Low-skilled operators could be recruited from the local labour market. More highly skilled technicians may be available from the local catchment area, but they may come from a wider area including towns such as Limavady or Coleraine. For highly skilled professional staff, the catchment area would extend to the whole of Northern Ireland, reflecting both the lack of local staff with the specific skills required, and the willingness of workers in these types of jobs to commute further. In some areas, notably IT and R&D, the specialist staff required may not be available within Northern Ireland or the UK, and the firm would bring in staff from, for example, China or India.

IKEA noted that salaries for managers and team leaders may - amongst other factors - encourage staff at these levels to travel up to one hour to get to work, which is less likely to be the case for those in roles on hourly pay. In addition, 60 per cent of IKEA staff work part-time and could work anything from a four-hour to an eight-hour shift. In such cases, it is unlikely to make sense to travel for an hour to work.

Similarly, at a Belfast city centre hotel, where a large majority of staff earn the minimum wage, most employees come from within a 5 or 10 mile radius. At management level this radius increases slightly, but most managers live in the greater Belfast area. A select number of staff come from up to 15 miles away. The hotel agreed that transport can be a problem for those working irregular hours, for example if a shift finishes after the last bus. Recognising such issues, the hotel asks candidates at the recruitment stage if they have the flexibility and access to transport to work non-standard hours.

5.3 Local contextual factors: the 'chill factor'

5.3.1 Introduction to the 'chill factor'

The sectarian division of social space through communal territoriality between Catholics and Protestants sets Northern Ireland apart from the rest of the UK and provides wider context for the geographical mobility of labour. Violence, either actual and directly experienced, or indirect and perceived, may influence the housing and labour markets. Specifically in terms of the latter, the 'chill factor' may lead to a reluctance to travel through certain areas, or work in a workplace dominated by a particular group.

The 'chill factor' may make it harder for individuals to find work, by reducing the number of potential jobs they would be willing to apply for. Even for those in work, 'chill' can lead to costs. Some people may avoid travelling through certain areas, even if driving, particularly during periods of heightened tensions. For those using public transport or walking this can lead to a much longer journey. In short, the 'chill factor' can inhibit the efficient functioning of the labour market

'Chill' may also create political pressure to create jobs in specific areas. This can be particularly difficult if parades or flag protests have created negative media coverage of an area, which may discourage firms from locating there. But even if politicians could encourage a firm to locate in a particular location for political reasons, it is unlikely to be in the best interests of the firm in terms of efficiency and competitiveness.

The current extent of the 'chill factor' is extremely difficult to assess and is contested. This has been confirmed by the research undertaken for this report, which has revealed a wide range of views on the subject.

5.3.2 Measuring the 'chill factor'

A lot of evidence on the 'chill factor' is anecdotal. It is extremely difficult to measure and previous research has identified that it can be confounded with other factors for a number of reasons.

Most people have imperfect and inaccurate knowledge of their surroundings. It is normal to go to one place instead of another, perhaps because you don't like the look of it or you feel unsafe, but in Northern Ireland this tends to be attributed to 'chill'. However, fear is often related to a general lack of spatial confidence and knowledge of the city, coupled with a localised world view – it is difficult to assess how chill differs from a general willingness to venture far. In one study, Green et al. (2005)¹⁵ suggest there are East and West Belfast views of the city. However, spatial perceptions of East Belfast Catholics are more like East Belfast Protestants than West Belfast Catholics. This highlights that location can become confused with religious background in a territorially-divided society.

At the same time, discrimination based on address ('addressism') exists outside Northern Ireland and 'chill' often coincides with other factors that reduce employability (e.g. deprivation, low skills).

On the other hand people may choose one place over another for sectarian reasons but be reluctant to tell an interviewer because they think it is unacceptable, or because they are not fully conscious of the factors influencing them.

¹⁵ Green A., Shuttleworth I. and Lavery, S., (2005) 'Young people, job search and local labour markets: The example of Belfast', available at: <http://www.guidance-research.org/EG/imprprac/ImpP1/imprpageof/geoglimi/attach/Young%20people%20and%20the%20job%20market.pdf>

In light of these issues it is extremely difficult to objectively measure whether the ‘chill factor’ remains a significant inhibitor of geographical labour mobility in Northern Ireland. Nonetheless, we have gathered a large amount of qualitative evidence through the stakeholder interviews. This is summarised in the sub-sections that follow.

5.3.3 Prevalence of the ‘chill factor’

Previous research has identified that the real or perceived fear of violence in inner-city Belfast can be a barrier to work. For example, in ‘Belfast: Segregation, Violence and the City’ (2006), Shirlow and Murtagh reported results of a survey of 9,000 people who live in interface areas. 81 per cent of those in republican/nationalist areas and 72 per cent of those in unionist/loyalist areas stated that on at least three occasions they had not sought a job in an area dominated by the other religious background. Similarly, 78% of those living within interface areas provided examples of at least three publicly funded facilities that they did not use because they were located on the ‘wrong’ side of the interface¹⁶. However, perceptions may not be based on the current situation or just wrong¹⁷. Some individuals have been found to use ‘avoiding strategies’ to manage risk, such as by varying routes/times to and from work.

The literature review notes that some elements creating the chill factor may have been addressed through successive rounds of fair employment legislation which laid the onus upon employers of promoting a neutral workplace free of national and sectarian emblems. Given the decline in polarised employers, it is possible that the chill factor has decreased in importance at least for some parts of the population.

Although there is some evidence that residential segregation fell between 2001 and 2011 (Shuttleworth et al., 2013)¹⁸, existing levels of segregation are difficult to overcome. Workers are still affected by events, emblems and signs outside the workplace and on the journey to work. Fear is more prevalent at politically charged times in the summer, are greater for men than women, and more powerful for younger inner-city residents than for some older people. In contrast, fear is not an obstacle for those driving to work from outside, who may be less affected by territoriality.

Within the focus groups undertaken for this project, participants in Derry~Londonderry, Coleraine and Strabane did not consider any areas to be ‘no-go’ in terms of their job search. In contrast, some of those in the West Belfast group highlighted areas of the city, in particular East Belfast, that they would feel unsafe working in. This was an issue of safety – they felt that in those areas there is potential for individuals (from the opposite religious background¹⁹) to take exception to where they are from. They acknowledged that this apprehension is something they have grown up with due to the Troubles in Northern Ireland.

The West Belfast JBO staff confirmed that chill-factor-type reasons were amongst one of the more common reasons they were given for an being reluctant in taking a job, though it is not something they hear on a day-to-day basis. They also noted that certain employers were seen as ‘safe’; for

¹⁶ Shirlow P and Murtagh, B (2006); Belfast – Segregation, Violence & the City; Pluto Ireland (page 85 & 91)

¹⁷ Green A., Shuttleworth I. and Lavery, S., (2005) ‘Young people, job search and local labour markets: The example of Belfast’, Urban Studies 42: 301-324, available at: <http://www.guidance-research.org/EG/imprac/ImpP1/imprpageof/geoglimi/attach/Young%20people%20and%20the%20job%20market.pdf>

¹⁸ Shuttleworth I., Barr P. and Gould M. (2013) ‘Does internal migration in Northern Ireland increase religious and social segregation? Perspectives from the Northern Ireland Longitudinal Study (NILS) 2001-2007’

¹⁹ When the term “*opposite religious background*” is used in this report it relates to Catholics and Protestants. This is because the notion of the “*chill factor*” has been interpreted as relating specifically to issues between people of these two religious backgrounds. Many other religious backgrounds are, of course, represented within the Northern Ireland population.

example Bombardier has good jobs available which can tempt people to travel across Belfast, and its site in the 'shared' harbour area of East Belfast can be reached without travelling through areas perceived as 'dangerous'. The Civil Service is also seen as a mixed employer, so fear is reduced, regardless of the location of work. It is unclear why certain employers are regarded as 'safe', although one possible explanation is that when good salaries are available there is a greater motivation for an individual to overcome any other concerns they may have about taking a job in a particular area. Another possible explanation is that employer practices in some organisations have been more successful in changing the working environment to make employees (and potential employees) feel safe.

The Strabane Job Centre staff noted that the chill factor is very seldom, if at all, given as a reason for clients being reluctant in taking a job now (although it was more accepted a few years ago). Derry~Londonderry JBO staff also reported that those attending the office did not tend to quote chill-type factors as a reason for being reluctant in taking a job in a particular area, although acknowledged that this may have been an issue 15 years ago. They reported that occasionally someone will mention not wanting to work in a particular area, but it was not always clear whether there was a genuine concern. At the same time, however, they noted the river in Derry~Londonderry can be a significant divide and a concern for some people who are reluctant to work on a particular side. In the past this was due to religious reasons. Now they are not necessarily scared of crossing the river, but they perceive it as much more remote than its distance implies.

In Ballymena the JBO staff reported that people were not unwilling to travel through or work in certain areas. However, some companies in the town are dominated by people from one religious background and jobseekers would sometimes be reluctant to work for the company if they did not come from the same background.

The Institute for Conflict Research suggested the 'chill factor' is a real issue within Northern Ireland, particularly amongst young men from a working class background who are unwilling work outside certain 'comfort zones'. It believes the situation has improved in recent years, but has regressed over the last year due to flag protests and associated events.

These views are echoed by the Youth Council, who noted that before the recession, young people had fewer objections to working with members of the opposite religious background. This was accepted as part of the job, and there was also a lower reluctance to travel through certain areas. However, at present some youth workers report young people are declining training opportunities based on their location. The Youth Council noted that sectarianism has increased as unemployment has risen.

The Youth Council explained that young people have been willing to travel to jobs and training in certain areas when accompanied by a youth worker, but would find it difficult to continue with the placement once unaccompanied. The Youth Council also reported that an unwillingness to travel into other areas is often due to fear of the unknown, reinforced by what others have told them. They suggested there may be an inter-generational element as parents (who may have lived at a time when there was a much more real threat of violence) pass on their attitudes to children. This was also mentioned by the West Belfast JBO staff, who expressed surprise that the chill factor remains an issue for the younger generation today. In some cases they suggested parents might forbid an unemployed young adult child from taking a job in a particular area because the parent would be worried about their safety.

Supported Employment Solutions have found that regardless of disability level, individuals will not cross a particular bridge or walk through areas dominated by the other religious background. However, in line with academic research, they confirmed that those from rural areas are less influenced by 'chill factors', possibly because they are more likely to be travelling by car.

Disability Action suggested that the young people they support may be fearful of moving into an area in which they feel uncomfortable, but noted that this may simply reflect a fear of the unknown, rather than any true risk to safety. They also noted this type of mentality is more prevalent in Belfast. Young people who have been at Special Schools can find the move to mainstream training daunting and may often require support settling in. Disability Action clients would prefer employment within their own neighbourhood, but this was often due to transport considerations rather than the 'chill factor'.

Gingerbread NI report that amongst their clients there is an awareness of the 'chill factor', but that often the willingness to obtain an education, training or work to better their family situation is too strong to let it disrupt their efforts.

The Derry~Londonderry technology firm was unaware of any situations where people would not come to the site because they were concerned about safety as a result of religious background or culture, or where cultural differences have caused problems. They reported that their employees are drawn from both major cultural groups within Northern Ireland, and many other cultures besides (e.g. Chinese, Indian, and Polish).

The Belfast city centre hotel also reported that chill-type issues do not generally affect their workforce. There have been a few occasions when individuals have been unwilling to walk home through certain areas late at night, but it was unclear whether this was due to chill, or just a general sense that an area may be unsafe.

An indication of the overall magnitude of 'chill', however, is provided by the 2012 Northern Ireland Life and Times Survey (Table 5.3.3). This suggests that 25 per cent of Catholics would definitely or probably avoid applying for a job in a mainly Protestant area, and 21 per cent of Protestants would avoid applying for a job in a mainly Catholic area²⁰. At the same time, over 70 per cent of people in each religious group would probably or definitely not have a problem applying for a job in an area dominated by the other religious background. Further analysis of the survey findings suggests those living in big cities or the suburbs of a big city are more likely to avoid working in areas dominated by the opposite religious background.

Table 5.3.3: Northern Ireland Life and Times Survey 2012 findings

| Percentages | Would you avoid workplaces in mainly Protestant area? | | | Would you avoid workplaces in mainly Catholic area? | | |
|-----------------|---|------------|-------------|---|------------|-------------|
| | Catholic | Protestant | No religion | Catholic | Protestant | No religion |
| Yes, definitely | 7 | 2 | 5 | 2 | 7 | 3 |
| Yes, probably | 18 | 7 | 5 | 5 | 14 | 9 |
| Probably not | 29 | 16 | 18 | 21 | 27 | 21 |
| Definitely not | 42 | 72 | 70 | 70 | 48 | 65 |
| Don't know | 5 | 3 | 3 | 2 | 5 | 3 |

Source: Northern Ireland Life and Times Survey, 2012

5.3.4 The role of infrastructure

In addition to the mind-set, attitudes and background of individuals, a number of stakeholders suggested that physical factors can play a role in sustaining the 'chill factor'.

²⁰ The survey involved 1,204 interviews with adults aged 18 years or over from across Northern Ireland

The Community Relations Council (CRC) noted that physical structures such as flags, derelict houses and CCTV can influence perceptions of safety, and therefore the areas where people from different backgrounds seek work. While CCTV is installed to increase safety, it may actually harm perceptions of an area by highlighting the need for additional security measures. In some areas steps have been taken to improve confidence, such as the installation of lighting; increased policing; demolition of derelict buildings; and the removal of security grills. But the CRC argues that there are still areas people too frightened to go to and there is a need to identify how these fears can be overcome.

The CRC highlighted the positive example of how the Department of Justice, CRC, local community groups and other statutory agencies are working together to transform or remove interface barriers, which should help increase access to employment for people in certain areas.

The CRC also highlighted the role of transport. In Belfast, transport routes often lead directly to the city centre, where it is necessary to change bus to continue to another part of the city. Moreover, in certain parts of Belfast transport routes correspond to religious background divisions, and many routes to the city centre come through predominantly single identity areas, such as the Falls and Shankill.

5.4 Local contextual factors: other

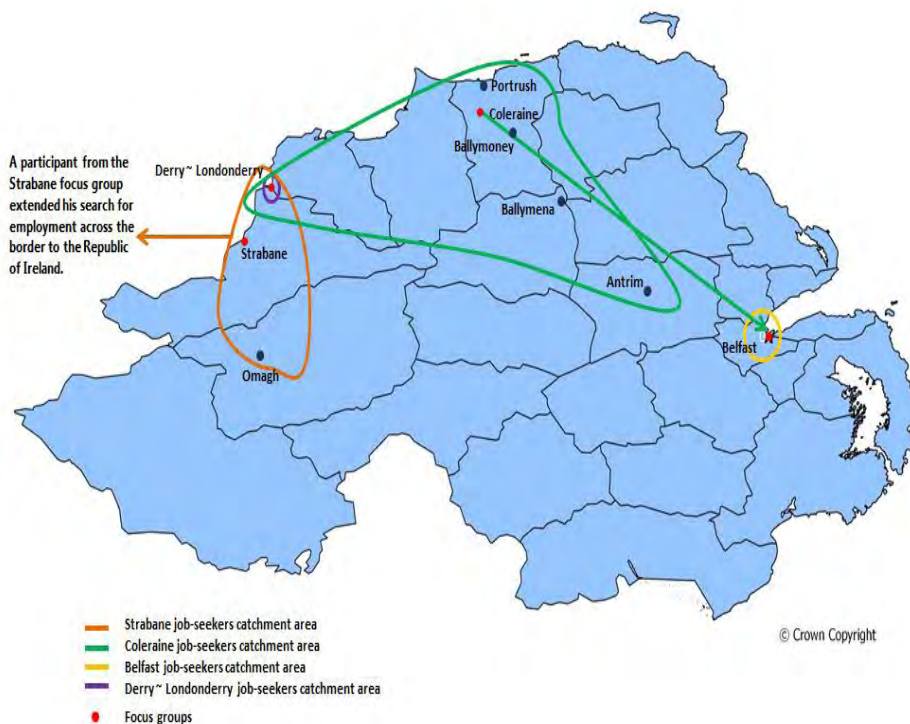
5.4.1 Quantity and quality of local jobs

The Strabane Job Centre staff explained that a typical 'Job Seeker's Agreement' stipulates that an individual must be willing to travel up to 1.5 hours to work. However, this does not necessarily mean that all people are willing to commute for that time in reality. In their experience young people were more willing to travel further. Similar views were echoed by the West Belfast JBO staff.

Focus group participants outside Belfast reported that a lack of job opportunities relevant to their skills within their home town or city had resulted in them extending their job search to neighbouring areas. Typical search areas were as follows (they are also shown in Figure 5.4.1):

- participants based in **Derry~Londonderry** were more inclined to restrict their job search to the city, or towns on main transport routes. The cost of travel and access to public transport restricted participants' willingness to travel to neighbouring towns/cities;
- those based in **Strabane** reported they looked for employment in Derry~Londonderry, Fermanagh and Omagh, which are around 15 to 20 miles from their home (this was confirmed by the Job Centre staff). One participant reported that he had extended his search to include opportunities in the Republic of Ireland;
- those in **Coleraine** reported that job searches focused mainly in Coleraine, Portrush, Portstewart, Derry~Londonderry, Ballymena, Ballymoney and potentially Antrim and Belfast. The wider job search area for Coleraine is influenced by the availability of public transport, which tends to be better than in other parts of Northern Ireland.

Figure 5.4.1: Indicative job search areas identified by focus group participants²¹



²¹ The job search areas are based on extremely small sample sizes and should be regarded as purely indicative.

The Belfast group was quite Belfast-centric in their job search activities, with some stating they were reluctant to look outside West Belfast for the level and type of employment they were seeking. The group tended to focus their search activities in West Belfast, the city centre and the South of the city.

The majority of participants outside Belfast indicated they would consider applying for jobs within neighbouring towns and cities where the position is full-time. Some participants believed it would not be in their interests to apply for part-time job opportunities outside of their local area because of travel costs:

“If you were going to commute, the job would need to be full-time. You would not even think about it otherwise” (Coleraine)

Gingerbread NI noted that Belfast tends to be better in terms of the number of employers offering work placements for their clients. In Derry~Londonderry there are few private sector companies responding to requests for placements, so the organisation is more reliant on community and voluntary organisations for placements - although Marks and Start run in conjunction with M&S operates in Derry~Londonderry. Ballymena falls somewhere between Belfast and Derry~Londonderry. Disability Action also reported there is a greater supply of placement opportunities in Belfast.

5.4.2 Local transport infrastructure

IKEA noted the influence of transport provision on workers' willingness to commute. In their case, staff from many parts of the city may be discouraged from working at the store because they would need to take a number of buses to get there. IKEA recruits mainly from south and east Belfast, Bangor and Newtownwards. Other parts of Belfast, such as west and north Belfast, attract fewer applicants. However, the IKEA consultee also highlighted the role of cultural norms. For example, in other parts of the world, staff might routinely travel longer to get to work, whereas in Northern Ireland people regard 30 minutes as a long commute.

The Institute for Conflict Research also highlighted the quality of public transport in Belfast as a barrier to employment in particular areas. It noted that transport routes tend to be focused on moving people in and out of the city centre, but even going from the north to the south of the city can take two buses which discourages some from making the trip.

Away from Belfast, a number of stakeholders remarked that transport barriers to employment were much more acute in rural areas. The Strabane Job Centre staff gave the example of people in the town of Plumbridge who have to sign on at the Strabane Job Centre, but to reach the centre without a car they must first travel in the opposite direction to Omagh, and then take a second bus from there to Strabane.

The Ballymena JBO staff gave the example of the rural village of Cushendun. This is served by the Ballymena JBO, but there are only five buses per day in each direction, with a journey time of over one hour and a return fare of £11.50. The last bus from Ballymena is at 5.45pm which does not always suit typical working hours. There is also no bus service on a Sunday which does not permit flexible working; as is often requested by employers. This makes a job in Ballymena an extremely unattractive option for Cushendun residents who would most likely only earn the minimum wage if employed.

The Derry~Londonderry technology firm reported that one of its staff members commutes from Belfast and picks up colleagues from rural areas on his way in.

The Derry~Londonderry JBO staff also highlighted the poor transport links between Derry~Londonderry and Belfast: a train journey can take almost three hours to cover 70 miles. The route is promoted as scenic, but this has little value to daily commuters. The JBO consultees drew a contrast where a commute of that distance might not be unusual in southern England, where transport links are much faster. They believed that if there was a motorway or fast train between Derry~Londonderry and Belfast commuting between the two cities would become a viable option.

5.5 Population and employment growth in Northern Ireland

Future patterns of population and employment growth will not be aligned. In some areas employment may grow more quickly than the local pool of labour, but in other areas the labour force may grow more quickly than the number of jobs available. Where such differences arise, geographical mobility will be required to move workers to jobs, either through commuting or longer term moves.

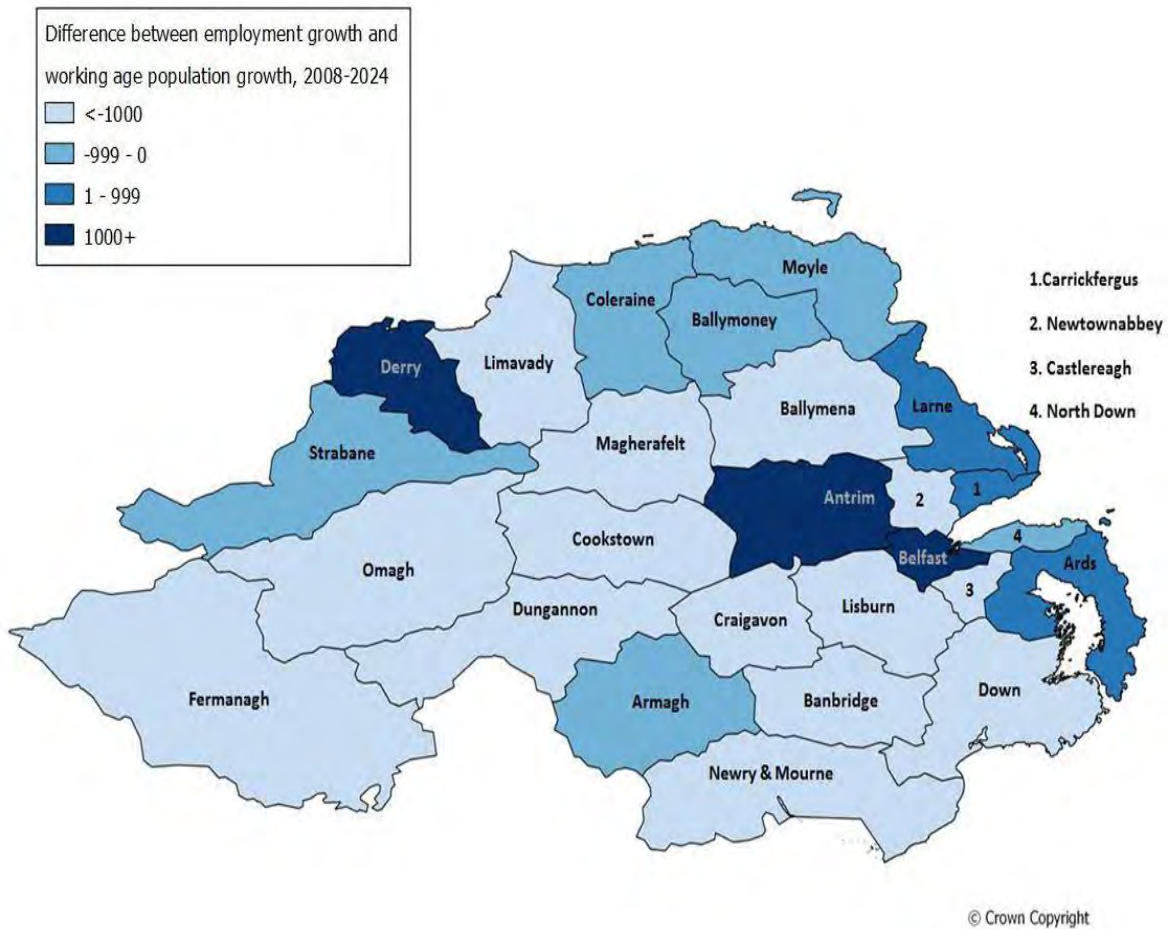
To explore this further we have taken employment and working age population forecasts from the Oxford Economics local forecasting model to compare the distributions of expected growth amongst local authority areas in Northern Ireland. Ordinarily we would consider only future years when undertaking such analysis. However, as reported in Section 1.2, Northern Ireland lost around 50,000 jobs during the recent recession. This means there is currently a large excess supply of labour that also needs to be taken into account. We have therefore analysed the period from 2008 (when employment peaked before the recession) to 2024. The analysis thus takes into account both expected future growth, and the need to recover jobs lost during the recession.

The findings from this piece of analysis are presented in Figure 5.5. This highlights, firstly, that very few areas are expected to see employment growth in excess of working age population growth between 2008 and 2024. But secondly, it is primarily Belfast and Derry~Londonderry that will need to 'import' workers from elsewhere in Northern Ireland. In the case of Belfast, employment growth is expected between 2008 and 2024, but in Derry~Londonderry employment is simply forecast to fall less quickly than the working age population.

These results are perhaps not unexpected given that future jobs growth is likely to be concentrated in services activities, particularly professional services, and that these activities tend to locate in urban areas where there are large pools of skilled labour and good transport links. But this does, nonetheless, highlight that the need for geographical mobility within Northern will increase going forward and that those in rural areas may need to be prepared to move further afield. Job prospects in many rural areas are unlikely to improve and could actually worsen for many areas.

Figure 5.5: Difference between growth in employment and growth in population aged 16-64, 2008-2024

*Darker areas are projected to see employment growth in excess of working age population growth
Lighter areas are projected to see working age population growth in excess of employment growth*



Source: Oxford Economics

6 Recent trends in labour market status mobility in Northern Ireland

Key findings

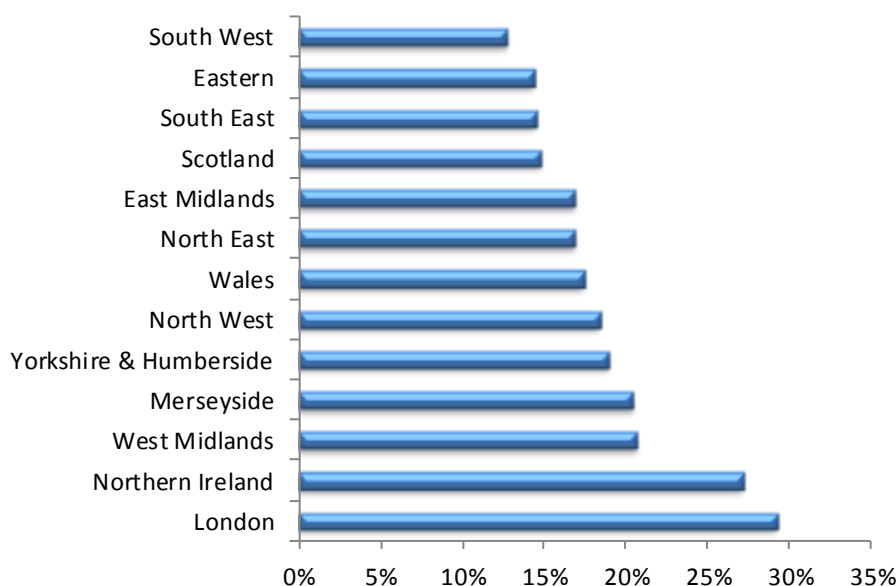
- Northern Ireland has a relatively large proportion of unemployment benefit claimants who have been out of work for between six and 24 months, suggesting it is relatively difficult for those who want work to re-enter employment quickly.
- Compared to the rest of the UK, relatively large proportions of unemployment benefit claimants in Northern Ireland are seeking employment in skilled trades or machine operative positions. However, such jobs are often found in sectors where growth potential is limited.
- The state plays a greater role in helping people move out of unemployment in Northern Ireland than in other parts of the UK: a larger proportion of those who stop claiming unemployment benefit enter government supported training or approved training.

6.1 Indicators of labour market status mobility in Northern Ireland

There is no single recognised indicator of labour market status mobility, but by looking across a number of indicators it is possible to build up a picture of the ease with which people within Northern Ireland are able to move between different labour market status categories.

A useful starting point is to consider the economically inactive population. Amongst this group, 27 per cent of people have never worked, the second highest share amongst UK regions (Figure 6.1.1). The inactive category includes those who are retired or studying, but Northern Ireland nonetheless has a relatively large share of its adult population that has never been in employment.

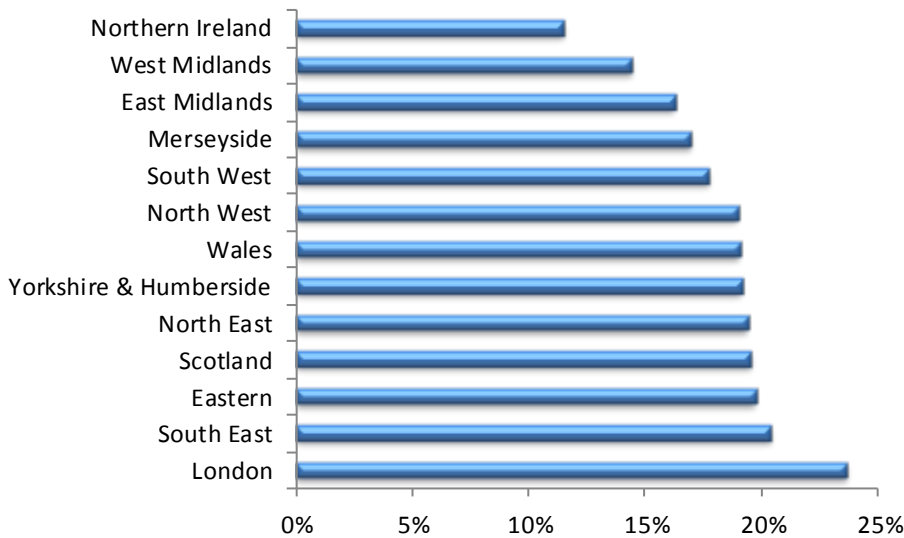
Figure 6.1.1: Proportion of unemployed and economically inactive persons aged 16+ who have never been employed by UK region, 2012



Source: Labour Force Survey, Oxford Economics

Only 11 per cent of the economically inactive would like to work, the lowest share amongst UK regions, and well below the national average of 19 per cent (Figure 6.1.2).

Figure 6.1.2: Proportion of the 16+ economically inactive population that would like work, 2012



Source: Labour Force Survey, Oxford Economics

During a recession some unemployed people typically become discouraged and move from being unemployed to inactive. In Northern Ireland, 19 per cent of those actively seeking work in 2011 dropped into the inactive category in 2012 – the third highest proportion amongst those UK regions for which data are available (Figure 6.1.3).

Figure 6.1.3: Proportion of population aged 16+ who were actively seeking work last year who are economically inactive this year, 2012²²



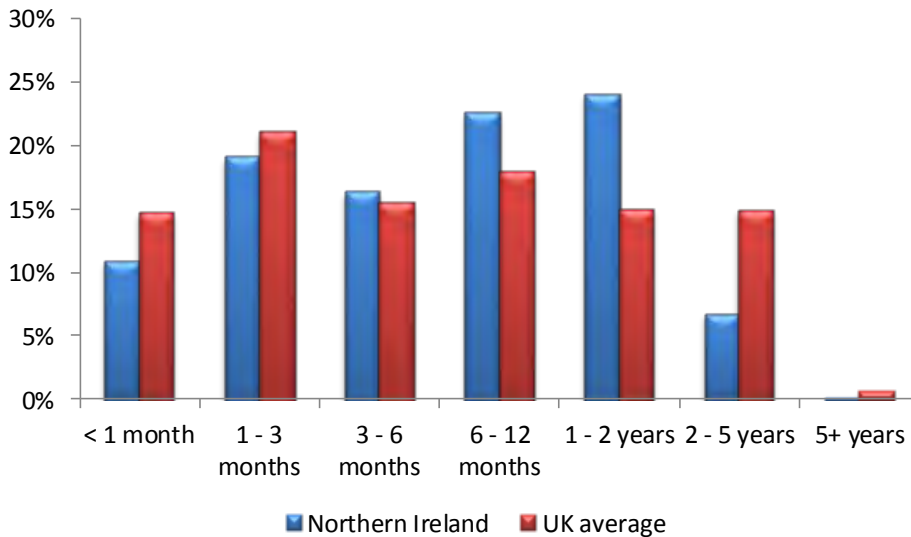
Source: Labour Force Survey, Oxford Economics

Amongst those actively seeking work, the length of time spent unemployed provides an indication of the ease with which people move back into employment. Figure 6.1.4 shows Northern Ireland

²² Data for Wales and Merseyside unavailable

has a relatively large proportion of claimants who have been out of work between six and 24 months compared to the UK average. In contrast, a smaller proportion of claimants are in the two shortest duration categories, suggesting relatively fewer people in Northern Ireland move quickly into work once they start claiming unemployment benefit. More positively, Northern Ireland has a smaller share of people out of work for two or more years than in the UK as a whole.

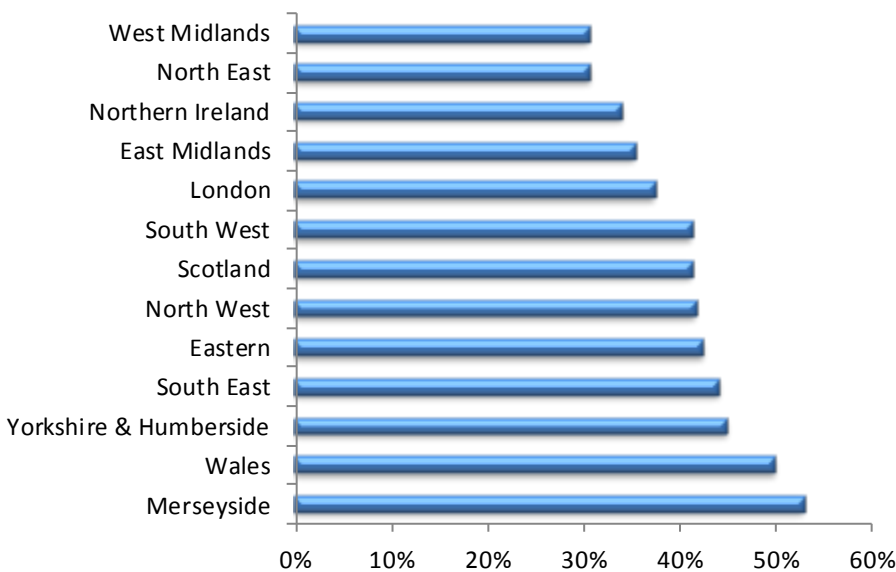
Figure 6.1.4: Proportion of unemployed claimants by duration, average of August to October 2013



Source: Nomis, Oxford Economics

Overall, 34 per cent of people unemployed in Northern Ireland during 2011 were employed in 2012, the third lowest proportion amongst UK regions. 47 per cent were still unemployed in 2012 and 19 per cent had dropped into inactivity (Figure 6.1.5).

Figure 6.1.5: Proportion of 16+ population unemployed in 2011 that were in employment in 2012

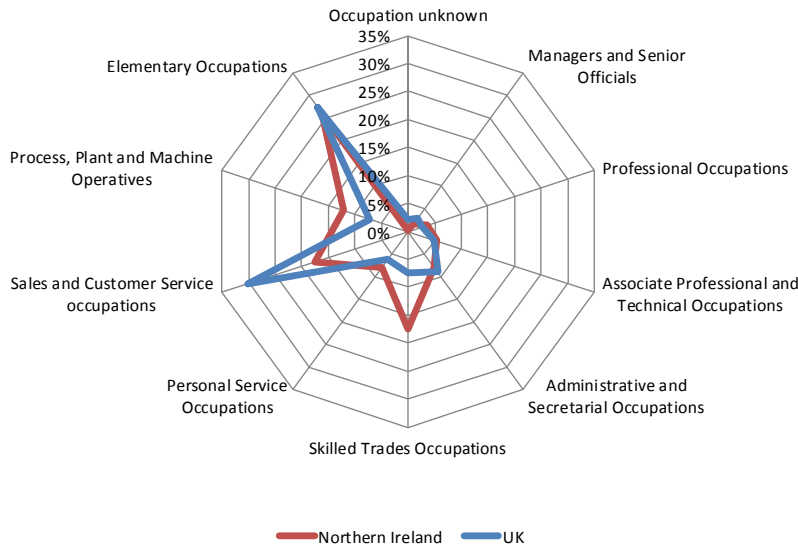


Source: Labour Force Survey, Oxford Economics

One reason people may have trouble moving back into work in Northern Ireland is a mismatch between the type of work they are experienced in an looking for, and the jobs available. The sought occupation profile of NI claimants is different to that of the rest of the UK, with relatively large

proportions of NI claimants seeking employment in skilled trades and machine operative positions, and a slightly larger share seeking work in personal service occupations. Conversely, as compared with other UK regions, relatively few claimants seek work in sales and customer service occupations (Figure 6.1.6). Many of the kinds of jobs sought are found in sectors that are not growing, or growing only slowly, particularly manufacturing.

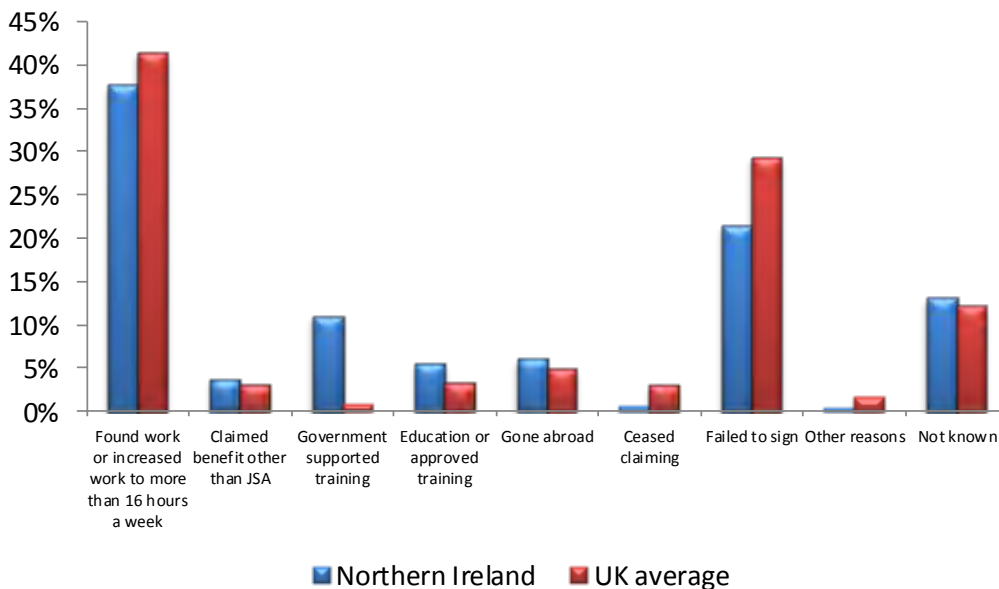
Figure 6.1.6: Proportion of claimants by occupation sought, average of August to October 2013



Source: Nomis, Oxford Economics

Amongst people who stop claiming unemployment benefit, a large proportion of people in Northern Ireland, as compared to the rest of the UK, enter “government supported training” and “education or approved training”. This suggests there is a greater reliance on the state to move people out of unemployment in Northern Ireland, but also that current DEL policies are proving effective in moving people off unemployment benefit.

Figure 6.1.7: Claimant off-flows by reason, Northern Ireland and UK, August to October 2013



Source: Nomis, Oxford Economics

7 Drivers of labour market status mobility in Northern Ireland

Key findings

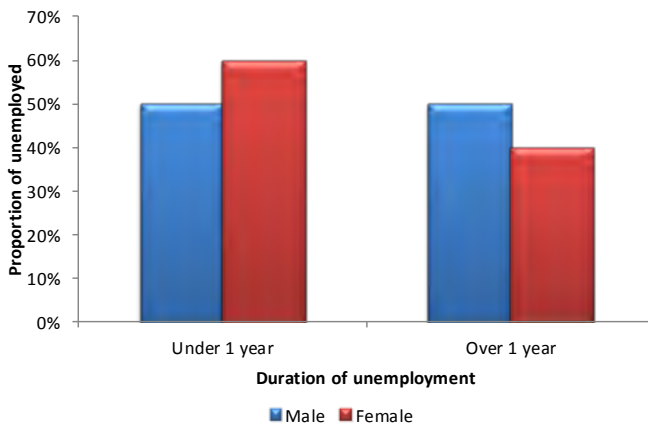
- Many of the drivers of labour market status mobility in Northern Ireland are consistent with wider research. Those who are older and male are likely to be unemployed for longer. Those with a disability face additional challenges: they may choose from a smaller pool of suitable jobs and may face negative perceptions from employers. A lack of experience, qualifications, or references was also identified as barriers to employment.
- A lack of motivation or confidence, or coming from a family with a history of worklessness, can inhibit a move into employment.
- There is strong evidence of a 'labour market queue' in Northern Ireland. An individual's place in the queue is determined by the interaction of a range of personal factors. Older, sicker and less skilled claimants may have particular difficulties finding work in the current economic circumstances. Consultees reported that graduates are currently applying for jobs that would previously have been taken by unskilled or low-skilled workers.
- There was mixed evidence on the impact of having children on labour market status mobility. On the one hand, a lack of access to affordable childcare can be a barrier to employment and having children limits the flexibility of parents to take up work with non-standard hours. On the other hand, children may act as a motivating factor.
- A relatively large share of jobseekers rely on job centres as their main means to search for a job in Northern Ireland. There is no strong evidence of information barriers to employment, although this may be a factor for certain groups, such as young people without the skills or confidence to engage at Jobs and Benefits Offices and Job Centres (JBO/JCs), or persons with a disability.
- There is clear evidence of the 'benefits trap' whereby some individuals prefer the security of benefits income to uncertain income from a job that may not last. Focus group participants explained that when deciding whether to apply for a job they looked at the number of contracted hours and pay to assess whether it would provide enough income to withdraw from benefits. Some believed their income would fall if they entered employment. This issue may be particularly acute within Northern Ireland, which has the lowest average wages amongst UK regions.
- Most focus group attendees wanted a permanent, full-time position to make it financially attractive to come off benefits. Some were reluctant to take short-term temporary positions because of the difficulty of signing on and off benefits. Some of those claiming benefits have unrealistic salary expectations, and may be unwilling to work at evenings and weekends.
- Zero hours contracts can be problematic because they create uncertainty about income and benefit entitlements. However, when used responsibly by employers zero hours contracts can be beneficial for certain individuals, such as students seeking flexible employment during university holidays.
- Legal intervention in the labour market is greater than in other parts of the UK due to employment equality legislation. One of the employers interviewed suggested the Northern Ireland government should take steps to reduce administrative burdens and make Northern Ireland more attractive to inward investors.

7.1 Individual factors and circumstances

7.1.1 Demographic characteristics

In Northern Ireland females are slightly less likely than males to be unemployed for more than one year (Figure 7.1.1a).

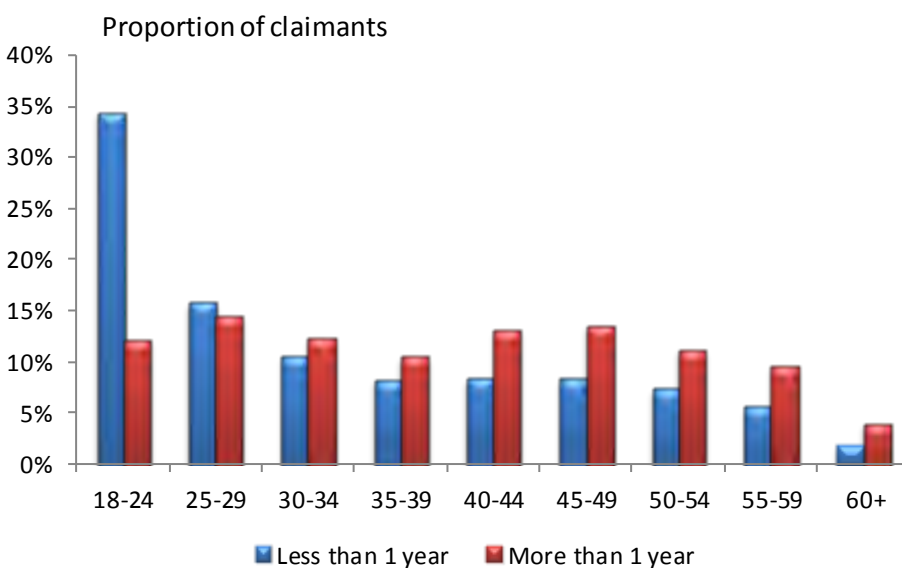
Figure 7.1.1a: Proportion of persons unemployed by duration and gender, Northern Ireland, 2012



Source: Labour Force Survey, Oxford Economics

By age band, people aged 30 and over are more likely to have been unemployed for more than a year (Figure 7.1.1b). This may reflect that many older workers have been employed in more traditional industries that have seen job losses in recent years. The skills and experience of such workers may not be well suited to the more service-based activities that now create more jobs. A large proportion of people aged 18-24 have been unemployed less than a year, probably reflecting the large number of people unable to find work after leaving full-time education, particularly during a recession.

Figure 7.1.1b: Claimants by age and duration, Northern Ireland, average of August to October 2013



Source: Nomis, Oxford Economics

The findings above confirm the findings of Shuttleworth et al. (2008)²³ and Shuttleworth and Green (2011)²⁴ that longer-duration claimants tend to be older. That research also found they tend to be less qualified and sicker than short duration claimants.

Turning to focus group participants, some focus group participants believed age can be a barrier to securing employment due to employer bias towards either older applicants (who may be more experienced) or younger applicants (who may require lower wages). One participant highlighted that although applicants are not required to provide their date of birth on job applications, employers are able to estimate someone's age according to their educational background or employment history. One participant reported that although she had never considered her age to be a factor when applying for a job, she felt she had recently experienced prejudicial treatment when attending a job interview because she was above the average age of their current employees.

"If you are going for a job in retail, say like a boutique or a young person's shop, I would think they would want a young person for the job. Office work may be slightly different because they might go by experience, from what I have found" (JBO/JC Client)

"Obviously there is a big difference in being over/under 21 in terms of minimum wage. They can pay somebody less to do the same role and that may be a factor from the employer's perspective" (JBO/ JC client)

Some participants claimed that advertised jobs and training positions often had restrictions attached which prevent them from applying. In many instances, such restrictions related to age, for example to limit the post to those aged 50 plus, or between 18 and 24 years.

One young focus group participant commented that most positions require one year's experience, thus making him ineligible to apply:

"I am only 18...the majority of jobs that you look at need one year's experience and so the majority of things are out the window before you start" (JBO/JC client)

7.1.2 Health and wellbeing

Supported Employment Solutions note that the barriers to people with a disability entering employment can be much the same as for other groups, notably in ensuring pay is sufficient to cover their needs; that the cost of transport does not make it uneconomical to take up work away from the local area; and so on. The additional challenge for persons with a disability is that their disability may mean a smaller number of positions are open to them.

Disability Action suggested that perceptions of people with disabilities can be a barrier to employment. Employers who do not have experience of workers with a disability may have negative perceptions, perhaps reinforced by media coverage. The perceptions of persons with a disability themselves can also be a barrier by limiting their self-confidence. To overcome these barriers the best option is often to get an individual into a work placement so they can demonstrate to the employer and themselves what they can do. By offering support to both employer and client

²³ Shuttleworth I., Green A. and Lloyd C. (2008) Survey Report: Incapacity Benefit Claimants, Geography, Households, Decision Making and Welfare Reform, DEL, Belfast, available at: http://www.delni.gov.uk/incapacity_benefit_survey_report.pdf

²⁴ Shuttleworth I. and Green A. (2011) 'Spatial mobility intentions, the labour market and Incapacity Benefit claimants: Evidence from Northern Ireland', available at: <http://usj.sagepub.com/content/48/5/911>

and highlighting the positive outcomes, there may be an opportunity to encourage the employer to offer paid employment.

Gingerbread NI notes that some individuals may face a combination of factors that make it more difficult to secure work. For example, a lone parent caring for a child with a disability, or who has previously suffered domestic violence may find it particularly difficult to focus on employment.

Of 288 people participating in the Youth Council's Youth Works programme, 28 per cent had a mental health issue, and 35 per cent were linked to drug or alcohol misuse²⁵. These are considerable barriers for this age group and can be a strong deterrent to an employer. The Youth Council also highlighted the issue of individuals facing multiple challenges. 16 per cent of participants on the Youth Works programme were assessed, on entry, as facing multiple barriers to learning, with some participants ticking all barrier options. Many participants found mental health problems particularly challenging, although long-term physical health issues and sensory impairments were also notable in causing difficulties securing work.

The Ballymena staff reported they face a challenge at present in dealing with jobseekers who have been in work and been laid off, and who are now experiencing depression. In many cases this is caused by the impact of an individual finding themselves back at 'square one', having previously secured work. Some individuals may have previously been in work for decades and become overwhelmed by the prospect of having to seek a new job that may not exactly match what they have done previously. This can have an impact on motivation to sustain job search activity and, in the worst cases where an individual becomes clinically depressed, can lead to a move onto sickness benefit.

7.1.3 Economic position and work history

Current skills and qualifications

Throughout the focus group consultations, participants highlighted education / qualifications as a major barrier to employment. The participants believed that, given the lack of job opportunities and increased numbers of applicants, potential employers were taking account of education/qualifications to shortlist applicants, whereas previously they may have employed individuals on experience alone:

"That is what they look at, your CV, to see where you have been, how long you have been there, how many GCSEs and A levels you have, and whether you went to college" (JBO/JC client)

Although participants may have seen a job they believe they are capable of doing, they lack the requisite education/qualifications to apply. Furthermore, it was suggested by a small number of participants that potential employers do not recognise the qualifications they possess, but instead are looking for applicants that have 'mainstream' qualifications such as GCSEs, A levels and University degrees:

"Any job that I see that I am capable of doing and have the experience to do it, unfortunately there are not many of them, they are all looking for GCSEs or longer experience" (JBO/JC client)

JBO/JC staff disagreed that people lacked skills to secure employment. They believe job seekers often need to improve their softer skills, but even job seekers with good qualifications are having trouble securing work at the moment.

²⁵ Based on internal Youth Council analysis of client registration data

Other JBO/JC staff reported that some jobseekers do not appreciate the full range of skills they may have, which limits their job search. For example, a joiner might only seek joinery jobs, which is a very restrictive search. However, the individual does not consider that they are practical-minded, good with numbers, and so on until the JBO/JC advisor points it out. However, with initial appointments only lasting 15 minutes it is not always easy to identify the full range of transferable skills an individual may possess.²⁶

JBO/JC staff suggested that the social skills of job seekers are often deficient, particularly amongst those aged over 50 or under 25. Staff recounted anecdotal examples in which young people were texting or accepting phone calls during an appointment with a JBO/JC worker, and then acted as if they were being inconvenienced when asked to switch their phone off. The JBO/JC staff also noted that some young people might dress inappropriately, for example by wearing a winter hat and scarf that almost covers their whole face. In some cases JBO/JC staff had been met with resistance when they ask if the individual would mind removing their hat. Some young unemployed people had apparently also got into the routine of staying up all night and sleeping during the day. The consultees suggest that individuals acting in these kinds of ways are unlikely to be successful at a job interview. Some skills are taught at the voluntary job club, but those who most need training are often least likely to attend.

Disability Action noted that, on average, people with a disability have fewer qualifications. This may be due to a learning disability or health conditions that may have disrupted an individual's education. Some employers may waiver qualification requirements for applicants with a disability as a reasonable adjustment although this is not always advertised.

Along similar lines, Gingerbread NI reported that whilst many lone parents have at least GCSE level education, a small group of teenage lone parents may have had a disrupted education. Although there is a statutory responsibility to provide education until the age of 16, schools react in different ways to parenthood and this sometimes contributed to problems.

JBO/JC staff reported that they encourage lone parents to update their skills before their child turns seven (when their benefit entitlement is reduced). However, in many cases the individual may have lost confidence and show little interest in learning new skills. They often do not appreciate the harmful impact of this on employment prospects until a few years later when the children get older and do not require permanent supervision, and the parent realises they need to have other things going on in their life. But by that stage they may be facing even more barriers to employment.

Experience

Focus group participants stated that a lack of relevant experience was a significant barrier to employment. Younger participants expressed that they were in an invidious position, in that they are unable to get a job without experience and unable to get experience without a job. A number of participants indicated they would like to undertake sector-specific placements to gain experience, and prove to prospective employers that they are able to do the job:

"It would be nice to get experience, but you cannot really get experience until you get the job"
(JBO/JC client)

"We need placements, the chance to get into places where we may be able to get a job and to prove ourselves" (JBO/JC client)

²⁶ The Employment Service has subsequently advised that further time and interventions are made available should these be required by clients.

One focus group participant noted that employers were looking for a range of skills and versatility. This was difficult for them to demonstrate because they had only held two jobs since leaving school. The sense that employers sought a wide range of experience was mentioned by another participant:

“It didn’t used to be like that. You used to go to a job and have a designated post. But now you have to fit in every category. They are looking for versatility” (JBO/JC client)

A number of participants highlighted that the job centre has proactively helped them to think about their experience and skill sets broadly, and to think about applying for positions which previously they wouldn’t have considered:

“They let you see that there is a job there that you wouldn’t have previously looked at, but when you think about it in more depth, you think, well I could do that” (JBO/JC client)

One of those who had been unemployed for a longer period of time had taken up a job placement with a charity to gain experience for their CV. Another has become involved in community outreach activities organised by their local church. They found this experience useful as they felt it gave them credibility and provided them with a referee for future job applications:

“I think obviously when you are younger you only work to get money, you know, to survive. I think it gets to a point, like with me now, where you become so fed up and bored that I would consider just doing anything to keep me busy until something came up” (JBO/JC client)

Disability Action and Supported Employment Solutions both noted that fear of the unknown can be a barrier. An individual who has not previously worked may have worries about how they might cope in work. People with disabilities may require support building self-confidence and personal capacity to enable them to carry out their job role. For example, Supported Employment Solutions suggested that work can bring increased levels of stress and fatigue and it is difficult to predict the impact of this on a person with a disability.

The Youth Council note that those who lack labour market experience may be fearful of putting themselves in a vulnerable or difficult situation.

Focus group participants highlighted that not having a good reference from a previous employer could be a barrier to employment. In some cases this could reflect that a previous employer is not available to provide a reference; that the individual has not previously held a position for long enough to have a reference; or because they had disagreements with their previous employer. One participant stated that because they had had disagreements with a previous employer they feel unable to apply for jobs which ask for an employment history or previous manager’s details:

“I don’t have a reference from my last employer and I know that I would not have got a very good one” (JBO/JC client)

Focus group participants also highlighted that the length of time they have been unemployed can be a barrier to employment, both directly, and indirectly through the impact on their confidence.

Training

Focus group participants reported that job centres have been useful in signposting them towards part-time courses which provide accredited qualifications or opportunities to gain skills. A number of the participants reported they have engaged in courses such as ‘Steps to Work’ to improve their numeracy, literacy and IT skills. Furthermore, a number of participants reported they went to the local further education college to undertake courses in a range of areas including IT, psychology, SAGE accounts, craft and tourism, and counselling:

"I have done a few exams in Maths, just the basics really, and I am doing English at the minute"
(JBO/JC client)

"I have been doing a lot of courses, trying to build my qualifications up. I have done the Computer/IT course and I'm trying to do as many courses as I can" (JBO/JC Client)

When probed about what actions they could take to make themselves more employable there was a general lack of ideas and, for a few, a lack of motivation. One participant suggested she was reluctant to obtain further qualifications because she was 'too old' and lacked confidence in her abilities. Another participant had enquired about trying to get on to a computer skills course however none were available at the current time. Others, who were open to trying to re-skill, questioned whether it would help them obtain a job given the lack of availability of job positions for those with no experience.

There may also be financial barriers to education and training. Gingerbread NI helps 50 lone parents each year through their 'Choices Plus' programme. From April 2011 until August 2013, this programme had a total of 107 participants. There was a 91 per cent completion rate and 38 per cent were moved into permanent employment. Between 2007 and 2013, 22 per cent of participants pursued additional (higher level qualifications) beyond Choices Plus (70% at degree level or equivalent).²⁷ Gingerbread NI also engages with colleges to help lone parents take up training. However, the organisation noted that a high proportion of vocational training places in traditionally male-dominated occupations are still taken by men. Gingerbread suggested there may be a need to make such schemes more accessible to women, particularly those who may have parenting or caring roles.

JBO/JC staff suggested they should have more discretion to tailor the interventions available to assist clients back into employment including via training.²⁸

The financial dimension was also identified by the Youth Council, who noted that financial support can be crucial to securing a young person's participation in training. The Youth Council highlighted that a survey conducted by the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) and the National Institute of Adult Continuing Education (NIACE)²⁹ identified that one in six young people faced financial barriers to training, including course fees, the cost of living whilst learning, losing entitlements to benefits and transport costs.

Echoing some of the views expressed in the focus groups, the Youth Council reported that some young people struggled with a lack of motivation to engage in learning, either due to a lack of direction or confidence, poor previous learning experiences, or linked to their wider circumstances such as unemployment. One in six people in the survey of young people undertaken by BIS and NIACE had been asked to leave a course due to behavioural problems or low attendance. For others, a negative attitude towards learning or themselves acted as a barrier. Support from a partner, family or peers was important, but one in five respondents cited a lack of support as a barrier to learning. This was particularly an issue amongst young female participants.

²⁷ Statistics taken from the Choices Plus Programme leaflet and Social Return on Investment report

²⁸ The Employment Services has subsequently advised that greater flexibility will be introduced as part of the new Employment Service Client Offer which will be introduced in Autumn 2014

²⁹ Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) and the National Institute of Adult Continuing Education (NIACE), Motivation and Barriers to Learning for Young People not in Education, Employment or Training, February 2013, available at: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/70141/bis-13-548-motivation-and-barriers-to-learning-for-young-people-not-in-education-employment-or-training.pdf

The Youth Council highlighted that one in ten people in the NIACE survey reported finding it difficult to find information on courses. In some cases inaccurate information resulted in provision not meeting expectations, resulting in the individual dropping out. This was consistent with the experience of a Strabane focus group participant who reported they had enrolled in an IT course, but it was shut down because of poor attendance. The individual was unable to find another suitable course.

The Youth Council noted that the perceived quality of training is significant. For one in six respondents to the NIACE survey, the format or content of previous learning had resulted in an individual dropping out of a course or discouraged them from taking up learning in the future. Other barriers included problems with the application process; the location of a course or college; relationships with teachers; courses being cancelled; and a lack of courses relevant to an individual's career aims. There was also a specific issue with vocational qualifications requiring a work placement. In some cases there are too few placements available, meaning individuals cannot complete the components required to obtain a qualification.

Also in relation to vocational qualifications, JBO/JC staff pointed out that the practical elements of many NVQs have been removed to save money:

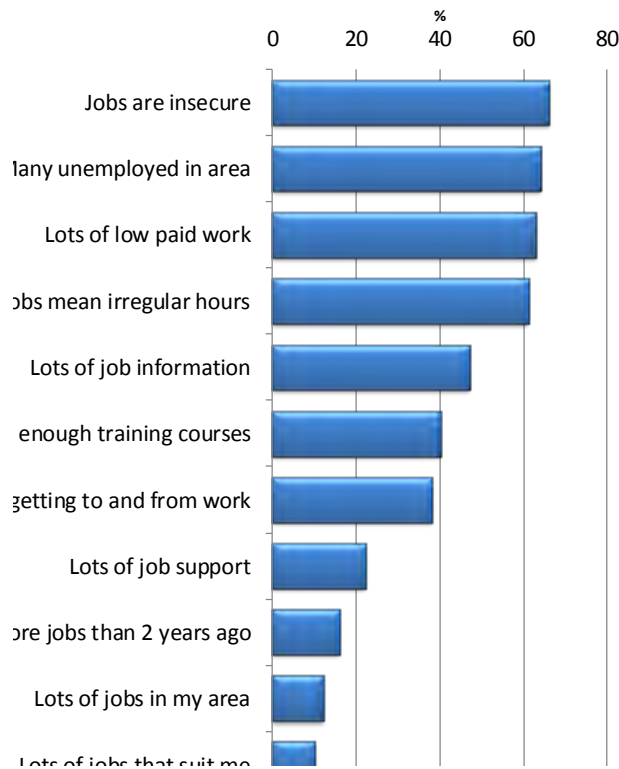
"We have had people come in here before with an NVQ2 in joinery who can write all about hanging a door, but when they actually got into a job as a result of their qualification they couldn't do anything" (JBO/JC staff)

7.1.4 Frame of reference and attitudes

Shuttleworth et al. (2008)³⁰ and Shuttleworth and Green (2011)³¹ explored the themes of health and spatial mobility, and attitudes to employment. They found that those in poorest health, who were older, who had poorer (or no qualifications), had other household members claiming benefits, and had been less mobile in their previous jobs (or had small mobility horizons), were less likely to be optimistic about their job prospects and less positively oriented towards work. Some claimants perceive a shortage of jobs in areas where, objectively, there are many jobs available. Longer periods in receipt of benefits were associated with pessimism about prospects for re-employment.

³⁰ Shuttleworth I., Green A. and Lloyd C. (2008) Survey Report: Incapacity Benefit Claimants, Geography, Households, Decision Making and Welfare Reform, DEL, Belfast, available at: http://www.delni.gov.uk/incapacity_benefit_survey_report.pdf

³¹ Shuttleworth I. and Green A. (2011) 'Spatial mobility intentions, the labour market and Incapacity Benefit claimants: Evidence from Northern Ireland', available at: <http://usj.sagepub.com/content/48/5/911>

Figure 7.1.4: Labour market perceptions amongst incapacity benefit claimants³²

Further insight into the attitudes of the non-employed came from consultations with JBO/JC staff. It is important to note that the text below reflects views and opinions reported to the study team during the consultation sessions and these have not been independently substantiated.

Although the underlying causes were not always clear, JBO/JC staff reported that some benefit claimants who would be financially better off working feel the small increase in income compared to benefits does not make work an attractive option for them. The JBO/JC staff also reported that some people are very open about their motivations: in some cases claimants had told them they needed benefits money to go out with their friends.

Some JBO/JC staff also felt attitudes are shaped by benefit entitlements. They said it can be difficult to tell whether people engage with initiatives, such as the voluntary Job Club, because they genuinely want work, or because they don't want to do anything that would put their benefit income at risk.

Other JBO/JC staff agreed that it can be extremely difficult to help those with a negative attitude and a family history of benefits dependence into work. Nonetheless, they suggested that pointing out the value of an individual's children seeing their parents in work can provide useful encouragement.

Also reported by some JBO/JC staff was that some claimants come to the JBO/JC feeling they are too well qualified and experienced to be there, and that they do not need help. It generally takes

³² Shuttleworth I., Green A. and Lloyd C. (2008) Survey Report: Incapacity Benefit Claimants, Geography, Households, Decision Making and Welfare Reform, DEL, Belfast, available at: http://www.delni.gov.uk/incapacity_benefit_survey_report.pdf

some time, possibly months, before they accept they need help and that they are in a challenging situation.

Disability Action suggested there can be a family or generational barrier to taking up employment. Some families may be concerned about the impact of employment on household income. Disability Action suggested there may be a case for providing support to families to ensure they are able to encourage and support a young person with a disability to take up employment.

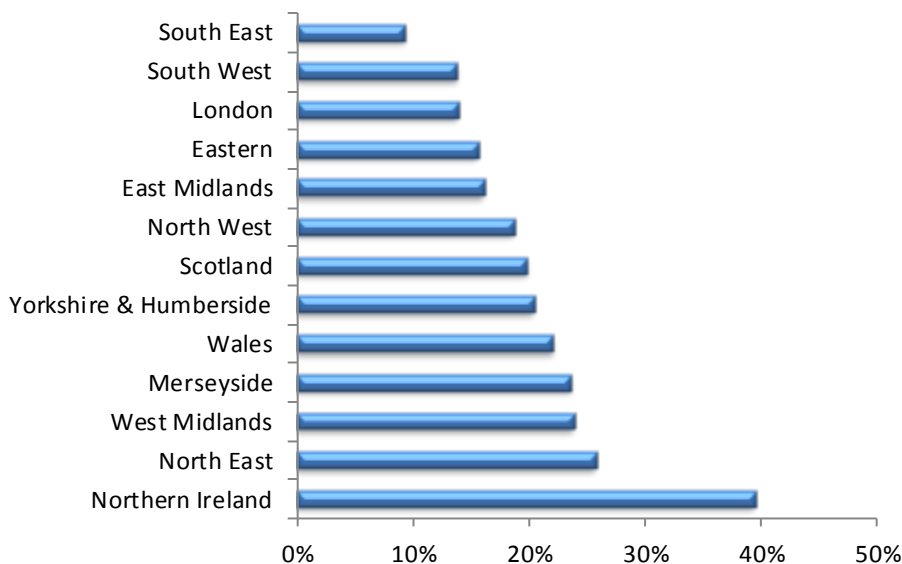
In the context of lone parenthood, Gingerbread NI reported that the lone parents they come into contact with are often ambitious for their children to not face the same obstacles that have afflicted their own life.

The Institute for Conflict Research note that in certain working class Protestant areas expectations with regards to employment opportunities seem to be very low. There is a need to explore how this can be challenged so that people come to see work as a reasonable possibility.

7.1.5 Labour market and job seeking knowledge

At 39 per cent, the proportion of unemployed people using JBO/JCs as their main method of seeking work is much higher in Northern Ireland than elsewhere in the UK (Figure 7.1.5a). Staff at one JBO/JC staff reported that the cost of newspapers can be a factor in this: some individuals visit the JBO/JC just to look at job adverts in newspapers. However, it is unclear whether this is more of a factor in Northern Ireland than in other UK regions. Staff at another JBO/JC suggested that it was mainly older jobseekers that used newspapers; younger people relied more on the internet.

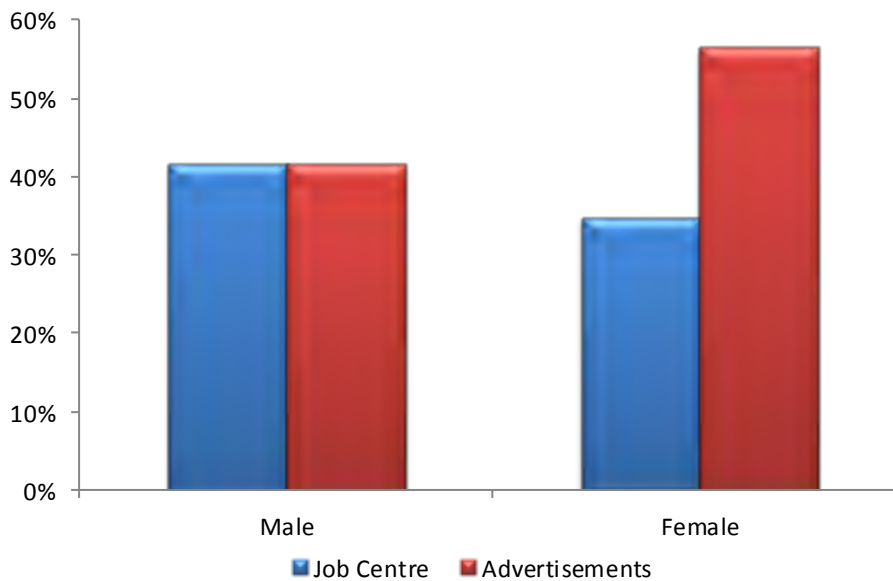
Figure 7.1.5a: Proportion of unemployed persons who use Job Centres as main method of seeking work



Source: Labour Force Survey, Oxford Economics

Females are slightly less likely to use JBO/JCs as their main method of seeking work than males, but are much more likely to use advertisements (Figure 7.1.5b).

Figure 7.1.5b: Proportion of unemployed persons using Job Centres and advertisements as main method of seeking work, Northern Ireland, 2012



Source: Labour Force Survey, Oxford Economics

Most focus group participants felt there were no significant barriers to effectively searching for jobs. It was clear that participants do not rely solely on one source of information, but interrogate a range of resources. While online searches are popular, local papers are also widely referenced. The main resources used are:

- job websites such as *jobrapido*, *indeed.co.uk*, *jobcentreonline*, *recruitni* and *communityni*;
- employer websites, e.g. *B&Q*, *McDonalds*, etc.
- recruitment agencies
- local and Northern Ireland wide newspapers;
- Twitter;
- Facebook; and
- word of mouth

A couple of attendees reported they had speculatively approached businesses in person to find out if they had any opportunities and to leave their CV. A few participants mentioned that they spend considerable time looking for opportunities:

“I sit on this computer here (in library) for about two hours every day and I am sure those people think to themselves ‘what is wrong with her?’ I Google, then go on the job centre, then go through the papers...” (JBO/JC client)

In general, participants felt that if they need specialist expertise this would be available through JBO/JC staff. Participants were complimentary of the support provided by JBO/JC staff to compile CVs, enhance interview skills and complete applications. In the case of one focus group, most participants were long-term unemployed and had only recently started attending the Job Club. They appreciated the down-to-earth, realistic and helpful approach of the staff. The view was expressed that other job seekers could benefit from this but may be reluctant to approach the Job Club due to a negative misperception of how they might be dealt with. Nonetheless, all those who had availed of this assistance considered it to be worthwhile:

“The job centre does mock interviews and gives you good feedback on how you performed”
(JBO/JC client)

“Well, the likes of the Job Club here have been very helpful... If you are filling in an application form that you are not sure about, they will give you help. This Job Club has been good with this sort of thing” (JBO/JC client)

“When you go down to sign on they see what it is that you are looking for. A lot of the times they go through it and are really helpful” (JBO/JC client)

Attendees were unsure what additional support might help them with their job search, but they were confident in the ability of the JobCentre staff to provide any other help required.

JBO/JC staff suggested that jobseekers are likely to be less open when discussing their situation in the public office, which is often very busy with different activities taking place in the surrounding area. Access to private space is therefore important in these circumstances.

Gingerbread NI highlighted that voluntary or community organisations such as themselves are also a valuable source of information on employment, self-employment and training. However, lone parents are not a homogenous group and it is difficult to say whether they collectively find it difficult to obtain labour market information. Some lone parents may have gained good qualifications and have more knowledge of how to use the internet and find information about opportunities.

Gingerbread NI runs employment programmes through DEL's Steps to Work programme and a self-employment programme in partnership with East Belfast Enterprises. They do regard self-employment as a viable option for lone parents, particularly as it provides flexibility and control over working hours. However, not all lone parents have access to the information they need to take up this option. There may, however, be other barriers: for example, banks are unlikely to make a business loan to a lone parent seeking to move into self-employment, without substantial collateral.

Supported Employment Solutions pointed out that the 'Workable' and 'Work Connect' programmes would previously not work with self-employed individuals. However, it was found that there was a lack of information or support on where to start as a disabled, self-employed individual and the previous stance was adjusted. Workable (NI) may now be used by the self-employed in certain circumstances based on the type of support required.

JBO/JC staff agreed that self-employment was a viable option for the unemployed and it is encouraged through the JBO/JC, though some felt that even more could be done to encourage it.

In contrast to the focus group participants, the Youth Council believes a lack of labour market information can be a barrier to employment. A lot of young people, especially those with no experience, need someone to help them move into employment suggesting a greater need for information and advisors to facilitate this. The careers advisors that are in place are under pressure and offer no service specifically for young people. The Youth council suggested that young people may lack the confidence to use this service, or have negative perceptions of it.

Both Disability Action and Supported Employment Solutions suggested that finding information on opportunities for people with a disability may have become more difficult following a perceived reduction in the number of Jobs and Benefits Office staff available to help specifically with people with a disability at short notice³³.

³³ The Employment Service subsequently advised that whilst the majority of help and assistance is delivered through appointment systems, staff can be made available to clients seeking any assistance at short notice.

The Youth Council notes there are particular problems for those not in education, employment or training ('NEETs'). They may lack the communication skills, concentration levels and confidence to benefit from careers advice. NEETs may also lack the skills required to write a CV (although note that in many cases there may be little to put on a CV). There is a need for advice and support more closely tailored to this group.

The Youth Council also reports that more practical support may be helpful in some cases. It is commonly assumed that most households have access to a computer. However, this may not be the case for those from the most deprived areas. Access to a printer to print out CVs could also help in some cases. A few focus group participants also reported problems accessing computers and a lack of computer skills, but they had generally overcome these through assistance provided by Job Centre staff and friends. Some also accessed computer facilities at the local library.

JBO/JC staff explained that if an individual claims they cannot find information, or are not confident using a computer, they would access information on their behalf at their desks. They felt there was no basis for a lack of computer access to be a barrier to finding work.

Some JBO/JC staff suggested that there is potential for more innovative approaches to support the unemployed but that there can be barriers which make introduction of such practices difficult. For example, they had suggested using social media such as Facebook and Twitter to help the unemployed feel more connected with their job search, but there can be security issues associated with the use of such media.

Some JBO/JC staff suggested that it is not always possible to spend sufficient time with each client to provide them with the full range of support needed to address the client's barriers, draw their attention to suitable jobs, and provide advice on where to find information³⁴.

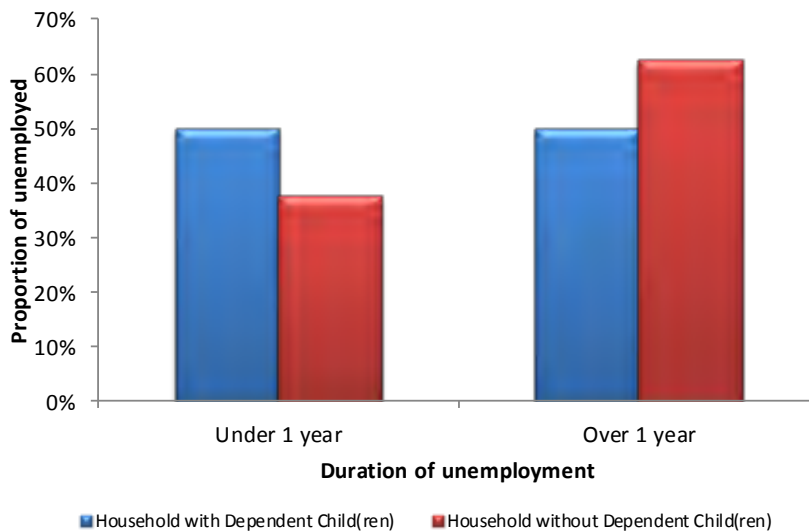
7.1.6 Household circumstances

A larger proportion of unemployed people without dependent children have been unemployed for more than a year³⁵, perhaps suggesting that children may act as a motivating factor to seek work, even if they limit an individual's flexibility in terms of the hours and locations of work they might be able to take up.

³⁴ The Employment Service subsequently advised us that further time and interventions are made available should these be required by clients

³⁵ Oxford Economics, NI Census of Employment, Labour Force Survey

Figure 7.1.6: Estimated proportion of persons unemployed by duration and dependants, Northern Ireland, 2012



Source: Oxford Economics, Labour Force Survey

Childcare can be a barrier to employment, particularly where irregular working hours make it difficult to get suitable cover. The need for childcare can also indirectly limit employment opportunities: Gingerbread NI note that low wages can be a barrier to employment for lone parents who would need to pay for childcare if they take up work. Gingerbread noted that retail and hospitality jobs are more often taken up by women, and these tend to be lower-paid, part-time, shift-work and have unstable or zero hours contracts. Some of these attributes are not suited to many lone parents that need to fit around childcare commitments. More broadly, they suggested there is a lack of affordable childcare provision in Northern Ireland.

JBO/JC staff in a number of locations highlighted that a young person living with their parents will always be better off in employment than on benefits. In contrast, someone with a family who depends on housing benefit would need quite a high paid job to make the move into employment worthwhile. The consultees highlighted that when a young person leaves their parents' home and starts claiming housing benefit, they may be moving into a situation of benefits-dependency that will be hard to escape from.

7.2 Employer practices

7.2.1 Recruitment and selection practices

Previous research in Northern Ireland has identified that in some cases employers may make specific attempts to reach out to jobless, and overcome the barriers that may be discouraging individuals from seeking work. For example, an employer may show prospective workers the nature of jobs, familiarise them with new employment sites, and select workers based on aptitude tests rather than formal qualifications. Such targeted interventions by employers, perhaps in the form of open days or community presentations can help jobless people overcome barriers.

IKEA explained that they advertise posts through their own website, RecruitNI and sometimes the local job centre, depending on the type of job. They have also undertaken initiatives with the Cedar Foundation (which helps those with disabilities) and Prince's Trust (which helps disadvantaged young people). During the course of the placements support workers are on hand to provide support to individuals with underlying health or social issues, but it is sometimes difficult to retain individuals once this specialist support is removed. IKEA have also employed individuals through Disability Action and the Workability scheme. Although the funding for such schemes typically stops after two years, IKEA is able to call upon specialist representatives beyond that time should the need arise. This enhances the feasibility of retaining staff recruited in this way.

The Belfast city centre hotel explained they recruit online through NIJobs.com, the hotel's own careers website and social media. The hotel has used LinkedIn and Gumtree, and has occasionally advertised through the job centres. However, the job centre has proven the least successful recruitment method, and when it is used it is only for entry-level positions. The hotel sometimes uses recruitment agencies, but this tends to be a last resort.

The Belfast city centre hotel has a formal selection process, during which candidates are scored against a set of essential and desirable criteria. The emphasis throughout is on ensuring fairness. The hotel runs trade tests and trials for certain positions, such as chefs, to test practical skills. They are also investigating whether there are more practical tests that can be run when recruiting for other types of position. These would assess candidates' teamworking and customer care skills, which are often related to initiative and attitude, and cannot be easily taught through training.

The Derry~Londonderry technology firm reported that it advertises posts in the press (typically the Belfast Telegraph and Irish Times), and online on sites such as NIJobs.com, LinkedIn and other recruitment sites. The firm has no specific initiatives to recruit the unemployed, although it does occasionally recruit through agencies which have large numbers of unemployed registered. During periods when there has been a high demand for temporary staff, many of those on the company's list may have come from the ranks of the unemployed. This provides an opportunity to build experience over a period of 6-12 months, and they might subsequently be offered a permanent position if one becomes available. Their experience with the company means they are better equipped to successfully apply for such roles than those from outside.

However, some focus group participants suggested they were reluctant to take temporary positions through recruitment agencies (for example one to two day postings) because of the bureaucracy of re-signing for their benefits when the work ended.

A number of focus group participants indicated that, because of the number of applications, employers do not provide feedback on job applications or interviews. It was suggested that this has the potential to act as a barrier to employment because applicants have no insight into the strengths/weaknesses of their applications:

“If would be nice if they did provide feedback because then you could sort of learn and the next time you go for one, you could say, well I’m never going to say/do that again” (JBO/JC client)

Disability Action point out that some employers may require support and encouragement to employ a person with a disability. Once the person is in a role, they are then able to prove to the employer that they are capable of carrying out the role.

Gingerbread NI point out that some potential employers still have negative attitudes to lone parents, and may have concerns that they may be unreliable employees due to their caring responsibilities. This is despite the fact that more and more people are becoming lone parents and they are far from being a homogenous group.

7.2.2 Employers’ requirements

Focus group participants were asked what skills they felt employers were looking for. In general these perceptions aligned well with what was reported by employers. A range of attributes were highlighted at the focus groups, including the technical ability to perform the job, relevant experience, IT skills, and attributes such as adaptability, a strong work ethic, honesty, loyalty, reliability and availability to work at short notice.

Participants emphasised that they tended to seek and apply for jobs they think they can do, screening out those that require skills or experience that they do not have. Most believed they had many of the attributes employers are looking for, such as being hard working and loyal, but in many cases lacked the qualifications and/or experience for the jobs available. This was particularly the case for older participants. This means that even if they think they have the ability to undertake the low/unskilled jobs advertised, they have difficulty getting short-listed for interview due to competition from other applicants with more qualifications or experience:

“Well I would say I have shop assistant experience and cooking but that’s all. I haven’t got no educational diplomas or anything like that so I would be bottom of the list really. But I am hardworking and I think I would know how to do it [the job]” (JBO/JC client)

At the same time, participants felt there was a lack of opportunities relevant to their skills set. One participant, who had previously gained a number of temporary jobs in Belfast, commented that there was a lack of similar opportunities in the rural town she had moved to. This was echoed by others who had relocated within Northern Ireland. Some commented that they are required to travel long distances (outside their normal catchment area) for opportunities relevant to their skill set.

A number of participants commented that one of the main obstacles was getting an interview. They believed that they would have more chance of convincing an employer of their skills and attributes if they had the opportunity to meet with the employer in person:

“I think you just hope to get an interview so you can talk yourself into the job” (JBO/JC client)

IKEA provided detailed insight into the kind of people they look to recruit. There is less emphasis on formal qualifications as much as other employers, but passion and enthusiasm are crucial. They also seek those with an interest in home furnishings. They can provide training to new staff in a lot of skills. However, staff must have an interest in, and enjoy working with, people. They find that these basic customer relations skills are often lacking. Some basic IT knowledge is also helpful, as computer usage is widespread across the store.

The Derry~Londonderry manufacturing firm reported that softer skills such as attitude, enthusiasm and reliability are more important than academic qualifications for lower skilled positions. The bigger challenge the firm reported is in finding those with the highly specialist knowledge required for higher skill jobs – such individuals often have to be recruited from outside Northern Ireland.

For the Belfast city centre hotel, flexibility and the willingness to work non-standard hours is an important requirement. The nature of the work, for example if a large number of unexpected guests arrive, or if a function is booked at short notice, means that the hotel relies on a workforce that can be very responsive. The skills and attributes sought vary across roles, but strong customer care skills, teamworking and the ability to use initiative are required for most roles. The hotel suggests academic achievement is important, and many newer managers joining the company have a specific hospitality qualification. Nonetheless, passion and enthusiasm for the hospitality industry tends to be the most important attribute within the company.

7.2.3 Working practices

IKEA reported that about 40 per cent of employees work a 39 hour week. The company also offers 16, 20 and 30 hour contracts. They occasionally offer fewer hours (usually to students), but try to avoid this because taking on a worker requires investment in training, uniforms, and other overheads, which may not always make financial sense. IKEA do offer zero hours contracts on rare occasions but tend to do this very selectively. In IKEA's case seven staff are on zero hours contracts – this tends to be for 18 -22 year-old staff that go away to study at university and return to work at the company during university vacations. Employees must work for at least a year with the company, and then a zero hours contract can be offered depending on performance and attendance.

The Derry~Londonderry technology firm explained its manufacturing plant operates seven days per week, with 12 hour shifts. The average week is around 42 hours. Professional staff normally work 39 hours between Monday and Friday, and have the flexibility to start between 7am and 9:30am, and finish between 4pm and 7pm to get up to the 39 hours. The company does employ temporary workers, but does not use zero hours contracts because they felt this would be unlikely to develop the levels of concentration and focus required to deliver against their manufacturing schedule.

At the Belfast city centre hotel employees' hours are determined by the needs of the rota, and may vary from week to week. The hotel does use zero hours contracts, particularly for staff that work on functions such as weddings and corporate events. However, if there are no events on in a particular week, the hotel attempts to find work elsewhere in the hotel for those on zero hours contracts.

Other stakeholders also drew attention to zero hours contracts. Gingerbread NI suggested they are problematic because they create uncertainty about income, and therefore about the impact on benefits. It is often impossible for a lone parent to work on this basis. There have been instances where Gingerbread has got an individual to the brink of employment, only to be blocked by the type of contract on offer.

The Youth Council recognised that in the current economic climate, zero hours contracts are often all that can be offered to those with no or low skills and experience. It suggested this has become a greater issue during the recession because the low-skilled now have to compete with graduates for work at the lower end of the labour market.

JBO/JC staff pointed out that it can be difficult to persuade someone that it is in their best interests to move from a certain benefits income to an uncertain income under a zero hours contract. A specific issue arises with the 'Advisor Discretion Fund', which can be used to help individuals overcome barriers to attending a job interview, such as clothing. Such funding can only be used if a job would offer at least 16 hours per week.

JBO/JC staff also pointed out that some zero hours jobs require applicants to be fully flexible all day, for seven days per week. This is simply not possible for most people. Nonetheless, such positions are filled, normally by those with the strongest desire to work. In some cases, individuals

have fallen into debt after taking such positions because their income turns out to be insufficient to cover their financial responsibilities.

In Derry~Londonderry, even jobs that do not offer zero hours contracts can be unattractive. The JBO staff noted that many of the new jobs coming to the city can offer very low salaries, and JBO staff mentioned that two individuals who recently started claiming benefits had left employment because of the low pay. Such cases can put off other unemployed people from seeking work with similar employers.

7.3 Local contextual factors

7.3.1 Quantity and quality of local jobs

Many of those consulted suggested that the main barrier is a simple lack of jobs. As well as the number of jobs available, though, the quality of jobs can also affect the ability of the non-employed to move into work. Jobs need to be at the appropriate skills level; offer suitable hours (the regularity of hours can also be important); and need to offer security to give individuals the confidence to move away from their benefits income.

Considering the question of whether there were sufficient jobs in Belfast, JBO/JC staff suggested that it depended on the kind of work an individual was seeking. In West Belfast there are a lot of construction workers and manual labourers, and there are few positions of that type available at present.

The literature review notes that less tangible personal characteristics can also be important. For example, in call centres there is a premium on voice and vocal presentation. Accent, diction and syntax are important and certain voices can be more or less attractive to employers. This can be a particular problem for those from certain areas (particularly inner-city working class areas). In some cases gender perceptions can act as a barrier to work, for example some jobs may be perceived by the non-employed as being for females, e.g. those in call centres³⁶.

Across the focus groups, most participants indicated they were keen to work full time to make it financially attractive to come off benefits. Participants reflected on their household responsibilities and stated they would not be able to support their family or pay for household bills on a part time salary:

“I have to pay my rent, I would need to work full time” (JBO/JC client)

“I’m a single fella and I have a house to run, rent to pay, oil, electricity, food bills and everything else. So 40 – 48 hours is what you would need, because if you are paying £75 a week in rent, that is a good bit out of your wages” (JBO/JC client)

“Over £20k, that is the mark I have set myself because of circumstances. Roughly around that, but that’s not to say if it was £18k I wouldn’t. However when you have your actual housekeeping bills and travel, you wouldn’t have much out of it and that is me being honest” (JBO/JC client)

“I would definitely need to be earning more than £200 a week” (JBO/JC client)

“Any job would pay more than £71, so I don’t even take that into consideration. If I even had £100 – that is better than £70 – if I was to be working 2 days, I would be better off. I would be prepared to work 2 days to get £100 than to get £70” (JBO/JC client)

JBO/JC staff reported that claimants are asked about their salary expectations when they register. They suggested a surprisingly large number of claimants stated they would not work for less than £30,000 per year. But the very same people may be signing on for as little as £75 per week (£3,900 per year).

³⁶ McKinstry D. (2004) Call centre recruitment difficulties: An investigation, Labour Market Bulletin 18, 217-223, DEL, Belfast, available at: <http://www.delni.gov.uk/lmb2004-28.pdf>

Some focus group participants expressed a reluctance to work at the weekends and in the evenings. They requested more traditional hours, expressing a preference for working on weekdays, either because of childcare commitments or concerns about negative impacts on their social life:

“I would only work 9 to 5” (JBO/JC client)

“The reason that I went to work in a shop was because it was daytime work and the reason I left the job was that I was working 20 hours a weekend. It meant you had no social life, you weren’t meeting family or friends and you were working most nights” (JBO/JC client)

Participants believed there is a shortage of full-time employment. They felt the positions available are often casual, and pay around the minimum wage. Some noted it would not be financially viable to travel outside their locality for part-time work:

*“Every time I look at the Job Centre everything is part-time hours, there are no full-time jobs”
(JBO/JC client)*

“They offer you 4 to 5 hour contracts” (JBO/JC client)

“I saw a job recently which I thought wasn’t bad and thought I would apply for it even if it is part-time. But it was like 2 hours’ work in Limavady. For me from Newtownstewart, to even think of driving to Limavady for 2 hours’ work a week, it wouldn’t be worth it” (JBO/JC client)

A further difficulty stems from the fact that some employers offering casual part-time work also wanted the person they hired to be available at short notice to work additional hours if required. This limits the potential for an individual to take up a second part-time post to bring income in line with what they would earn in a full-time post.

Overall, focus group participants highlighted the lack of job opportunities as the major barrier to obtaining employment. The participants were in agreement that although they were all actively engaged in seeking work, there were insufficient full-time positions and there are a substantial number of applicants for full-time jobs that become available. Two participants reported applying for jobs which had received 300 or more applications.

7.4 National contextual factors

7.4.1 Macroeconomy

The evidence in the previous section confirms the finding of the literature review that there is a 'labour market queue', and that an individual's place in the queue is determined by the interaction of a range of personal factors. This implies older and sicker claimants may have particular difficulties finding work in the current economic circumstances in which jobs are in short supply.

This was confirmed by JBO/JC staff in two locations, and the Youth Council, who noted that graduates are taking up jobs that would previously have been taken by unskilled or low-skilled workers. This is happening across all contract types, including part-time positions. Before the recession, the JBO/JC staff would work with those that were most difficult to move into employment. But now a much wider range of people come to the JBO/JC, including graduates and tradespeople. One JBO/JC gave the example of a retailer which usually hires students for seasonal work at Christmas. This year a wide range of people applied for the positions, irrespective of age or experience. JBO/JC staff in Belfast estimated that a few hundred applicants recently applied for four posts at a large DIY retailer offering eight hours per week.

Disability Action noted that people with a disability often have to compete with graduates for roles they might previously have expected to have secured.

7.4.2 Regulation, including equalities and anti-discrimination policy

Legal intervention in the labour market is greater than in other parts of the UK due to the existence of employment equality legislation.

The Derry~Londonderry technology firm suggested employment legislation in Northern Ireland is complex, giving the specific example of the fair employment rules. They understood the need for these and felt they were helpful in supporting equality. At the same time, however, it requires costly administrative resources to handle the monitoring and reporting requirements. Overall they would like to see the Northern Ireland government taking a more proactive approach in the area of employment legislation to make Northern Ireland more attractive to inward investors.

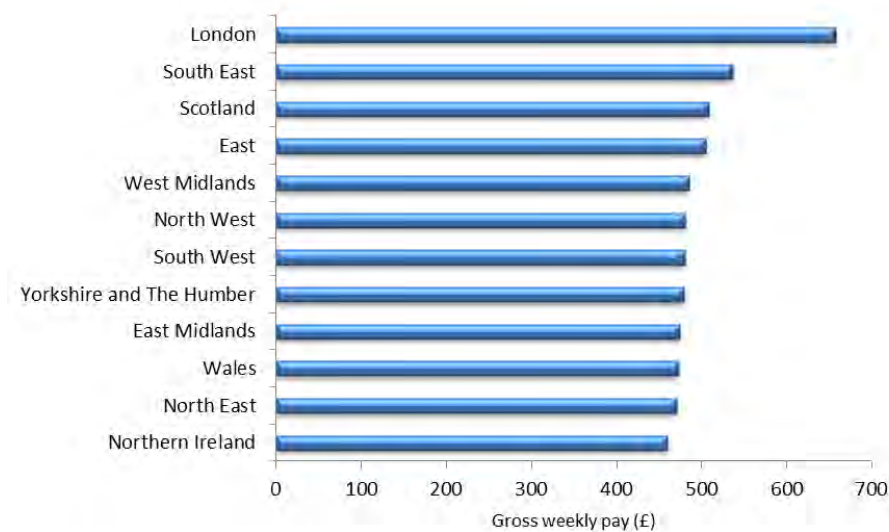
IKEA pointed out that many of their staff are young and do not appear to like to be pigeon-holed in the reporting requirements. They also suggested the legislation may not be keeping up with more recent trends, such as international migration.

7.4.3 Welfare and institutional factors

In theory, people in employment should be better off than on benefits. However, the literature review identified that some workers may prefer the perceived security of benefits income to the uncertainty of wage income from job that may not last (particularly given delays with signing on and off benefits). This is a particular problem for those on multiple benefits as it may be extremely unclear how their overall income may be affected by taking up employment.

Average wages in Northern Ireland are the lowest amongst UK regions, which may make it particularly difficult to secure work that pays more than benefits income. To the extent this is the case, the benefits trap may be more acute in Northern Ireland than in other parts of the UK.

Figure 7.4.3: Median gross weekly pay, full-time workers, workplace based, 2013



Source: Nomis, Oxford Economics

The existence of the benefits trap was confirmed by focus group participants who explained that when seeking work they not only looked at the skill requirements, but also the number of contracted hours and level of pay to assess whether the job would provide enough income to withdraw from benefits. Some believed their income would fall if they entered employment:

“Well if you have mortgages, children, carers and travel expenses, you need to be on the right money. There is no point in going to a £10k job when you are going to be £15k out of pocket over the year” (JBO/JC client)

“I am on Jobseekers Allowance and I have one lad who is 17 and a daughter at 21, so I am claiming for myself, my wife and son. It needs to be a job that would be more than what we would be getting on Family Tax Credit and Jobseekers Allowance. Because at the end of the day, if it is like a part-time job or whatever, even a full-time job, for what you would spend you are getting nothing out of it. The only thing is that you are working for your own self-worth. You are working for nothing” (JBO/JC client)

Gingerbread NI noted that lone parents may be particularly risk averse and afflicted by this situation because they are uncertain of how changes might affect their children. They argued that it is not the case that lone parents feel comfortable and secure claiming benefits, but rather they are afraid and have low confidence in the alternative. Debt problems mean that some individuals rely on payday loans or store cards and may struggle to make payments if benefits income was affected by taking up employment.

In theory, if a jobseeker turns down a reasonable job offer or does not apply or attend an interview for a post they have been directed towards, they should receive a fine equivalent to up to two weeks' benefit payments. Staff at one JBO/JC suggested this is rarely implemented.

Job seekers reported looking for longer-term contracts over casual work due to the perceived difficulties with re-claiming benefits when a job ends. Continuity of financial provision was a further concern of employment. One commented on the implications of becoming unwell and the impact this would have on their wages. They stated that they would prefer to stay on benefits as they are guaranteed a source of income:

"If you go on the sick it will affect your benefits and you're waiting weeks for your money" (JBO/JC client)

JBO/JC staff indicated that if a job does not work out the individual must return to the JBO/JC and start claiming benefits all over again. This disrupts their benefit payments and JBO/JC staff suggested that initiatives which provide a 'run-on' period, similar to that for housing benefit whereby benefits were paid for a period at the start of employment, could provide a safety net to the individual.

A further issue highlighted by the JBO staff was that most jobs are paid monthly. When benefits stop, someone taking up a job has to go for a month without any income. Some can claim an 'alignment to wages' loan through the social security agency, but this must be repaid when the individual receives their first wage packet. This means a large proportion of the first month's pay may be needed for the loan repayment, leaving the individual with little money to live on until their next pay packet a month later.

Conversely, a small number of focus group participants felt that it would be beneficial to have a part-time contract and continue to receive some form of benefits:

"If you work under 16 hours you can still keep your jobseekers, but this job was 18 hours and the money I was getting was only £20 more so it wasn't really worth my while" (JBO/JC client)

"They encourage people to work and people want to work but it just doesn't make sense the hours that you would have to work to be able to be self-sufficient and not have any support" (JBO/JC client)

The Community Relations Council also felt the benefits trap argument is over-played – in their experience the majority of people do want to work.

The Derry~Londonderry technology firm did not feel the benefits trap argument applied to the kind of workers they were seeking. Even lower end jobs in their company would make someone considerably better off than being on benefits. This is reflected in the interest shown when jobs become available: they estimated an advert for a production operator would result 750-1000 application pack requests.

Similarly, the benefits trap has not created any barriers to recruitment for the Belfast hotel. The hotel does find that some staff prefer to work 16 hours a week once they have a child, but that can be mutually beneficial since people in that position generally prefer to work in the mornings when the hotel needs dedicated workers to make up rooms and undertake other work that must be completed at the start of the day.

The Youth Council noted that the benefits system can create problems around training. Young people are taking short half- to one- day courses to strengthen their knowledge and CVs. When benefits offices learn of these courses they can then get categorised as 'not looking for work'. There is therefore a risk the benefits system may be discouraging training that would ultimately increase the mobility of young workers.

Disability Action highlighted problems for persons with a disability around the 16 hours policy. In order for people with disabilities to access Working Tax Credit or WorkableNI they must work a minimum of 16 hours per week. Some employers are not prepared to offer 16 hour contracts and this can be a barrier for people with a disability.

8 Attitudes to labour mobility in Northern Ireland: telephone survey results

Key findings

- Evidence from the telephone survey is generally consistent with the findings from other parts of the project.
- There was a widespread sense amongst respondents that there is a lack of job opportunities in Northern Ireland. This was particularly apparent amongst young people.
- Childcare was identified as an important barrier to employment.
- Transport costs were the most important consideration when deciding which jobs to apply for, and when an individual is calculating whether they would be better off in work.
- Only 29 per cent of interviewees suggested they would be willing to move to another part of Northern Ireland to obtain employment. Young people were more prepared to move than older people.
- Just over a third of respondents would be prepared to travel no more than 10 miles to work, suggesting that a significant proportion of the non-employed population have a very localised view of the labour market. A further 29 per cent of respondents would be prepared to travel ten to 20 miles.
- The survey confirmed that the 'chill factor' is not a concern for the majority of the population: 89 per cent of respondents said there are no areas within a reasonable distance of their home where they would not be willing to work. Amongst those who did have concerns about working in certain areas, just over half cited religious or political reasons, and almost one fifth suggested they would feel unsafe. There was strongest evidence of 'chill' amongst respondents in Belfast.
- The survey confirmed that job centres (including Jobcentre Online) and newspapers remain important sources of employment information in Northern Ireland.
- Interviewees showed a good appreciation of the value employers place on soft skills such as teamworking and communication. Consistent with the evidence from employers, formal qualifications were regarded as less important.
- Almost one quarter of survey respondents suggested they would need a wage of at least £300 per week to enter work. Amongst Income Support recipients, 39 per cent quoted this level of pay. The minimum level of income needed to come off benefits was slightly lower for those in the youngest age group than for those in older age groups.

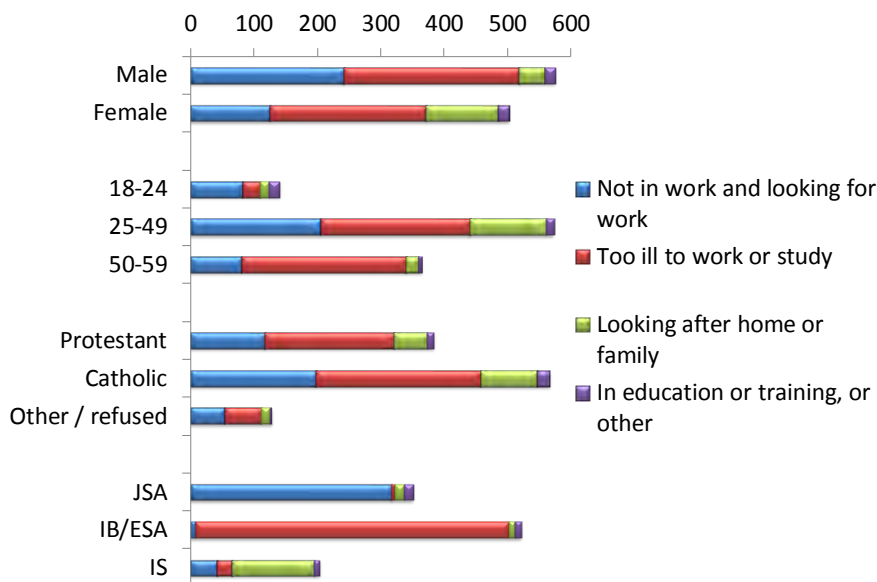
8.1 Introduction

This section of the report presents the main findings of the telephone survey undertaken by Perceptive Insight Market Research (PIMR) during February 2014. The survey included 1,078 completed interviews with non-employed individuals. Interviewees were drawn from an initial sample of 3,866 drawn at random from the DEL database of benefit recipients³⁷.

Figure 8.1 summarises the characteristics of interviewees. The main features are as follows:

- 53 per cent were male, and 47 per cent female;
- 53 per cent were aged 25-49, 34 per cent were 50-59, and 13 per cent were 18-24;
- 53 per cent were Catholic, 36 per cent Protestant, and 12 per cent other or did not answer;
- 48 per cent of respondents were on Incapacity Benefit or Employment and Support Allowance, one third were on Job Seeker’s Allowance, and 19 per cent were on Income Support; and
- 49 per cent described themselves as too ill to work or study, 34 per cent were looking for work, and 14 per cent were looking after their home or family.

Figure 8.1: Telephone survey respondents by gender, age, religious background, benefit type and current status



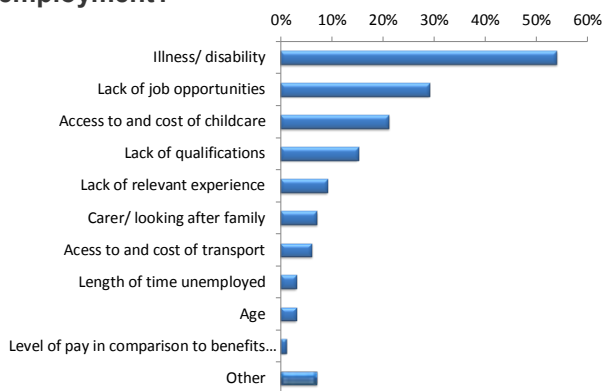
Source: PIMR Telephone Survey

³⁷ Sampling continued until the characteristics of the sample matched those of the stratification group in terms of age group, gender and benefit type (JSA, ESA, Other).

8.2 Main barriers to employment

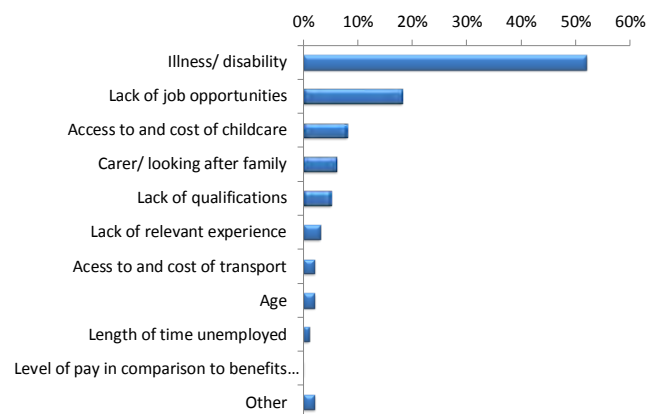
52 per cent of interviewees cited illness or disability as the most important reason for not being in work. This is slightly above the 48 per cent of interviewees who are in receipt of Incapacity Benefit or Employment and Support allowance, suggesting that a small percentage of those interviewed may see illness or disability as a barrier to work, even if they have not been formally assessed as eligible for an illness or disability-related benefit. Illness or disability was the most important reason for not working for 73 per cent of those aged 50-59, but for only 27 per cent of those aged 18-24.

Figure 8.2a: For you personally, what are the main issues preventing you from obtaining employment?



Source: PIMR Telephone Survey

Figure 8.2b: And of these, which is the most important?



Source: PIMR Telephone Survey

Aside from illness/disability, there was a widespread sense amongst interviewees that there is a lack of job opportunities: 29 per cent cited this as a reason for not being in work, and for 18 per cent it was considered the main reason. The lack of opportunities was a particular issue for young people: 27 per cent of 18-24 year olds cited this as the most important barrier to work, compared to 20 per cent of 25-49 year olds, and 11 per cent of 50-59 year olds. Along similar lines, 14 per cent of the interviewees in the youngest age group regarded a lack of relevant experience as the most important barrier, compared to 3 per cent and 0 per cent in the 25-49 and 50-59 age groups respectively.

Consistent with other aspects of the research for this project, interviewees highlighted childcare as an important barrier – the third most important after illness/disability and the lack of opportunities. 8 per cent of interviewees suggested access to or the cost of childcare was the most important barrier to employment (and 21 per cent of interviewees cited it as one of the main barriers).

Interviewees regarded transport as a less significant barrier than childcare: 6 per cent of interviewees cited access to or the cost of transport as one of the main barriers to employment, and only 2 per cent suggested it was the main barrier to employment. A lack of qualifications or experience were regarded as more important barriers to employment.

This does not necessarily mean that transport is not a barrier to employment in Northern Ireland. It may simply not be the ‘binding’ constraint. For an individual unable to work because of sickness or disability, or because they cannot find suitable childcare, the ability to travel to a job will not be a consideration. At the same time, other parts of the research for this project have shown that many people in Northern Ireland have a very localised perspective and, for them, transport to other areas may not be an important consideration. Further insights into attitudes to transport are discussed in the sections below.

Only 1 per cent of those interviewed regarded the level of pay in work relative to benefits income as a barrier to employment. None regarded this as the most important barrier to employment. This contrasts with the findings of the focus groups, which suggested that those not in work carefully weigh up the costs and benefits of moving into work. However, other evidence from the survey suggests pay is an important consideration for those interviewed, even if they do not see it as a 'barrier' as such. This is discussed further below.

8.3 Attitudes to geographical mobility amongst survey respondents

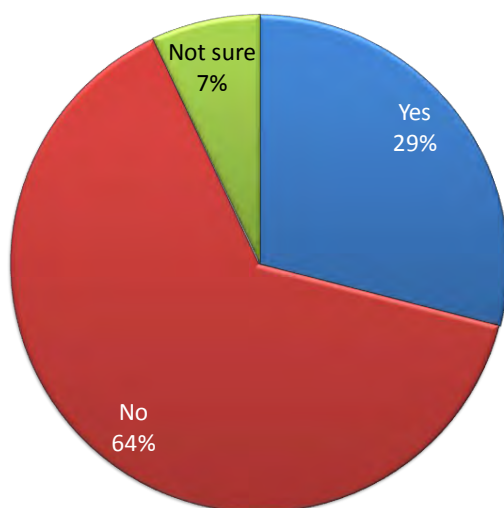
8.3.1 Geographical mobility through longer distance moves

Only 29 per cent of interviewees suggested they would be willing to move to another part of Northern Ireland to obtain employment (Figure 8.3.1a). Almost two-thirds said they would not be prepared to move to another area.

Consistent with other parts of the research, young people were more prepared to move to another part of Northern Ireland: 48 per cent of 18-24 year olds would be prepared to do this, compared to 26 per cent of those aged 25-49 and 14 per cent of those aged 50-59. Males were also more prepared to move to another area: 35 per cent, compared to 15 per cent of females.

By benefit type, only 13 per cent of those receiving Income Support would be prepared to move to another part of Northern Ireland. This compares to around a third for those on Job Seeker's Allowance, or Incapacity Benefit or Employment and Support Allowance.

Figure 8.3.1a: Would you be prepared to move to another part of Northern Ireland to obtain employment?



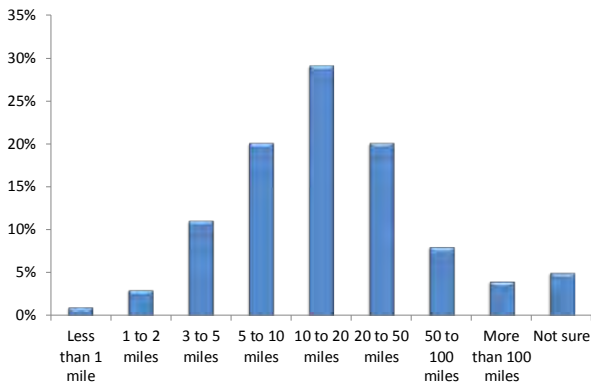
Source: PIMR Telephone Survey

8.3.2 Geographical mobility through daily commuting

Interviewees were asked how far they would be prepared to commute to work. 35 per cent identified a distance of no more than 10 miles, confirming the findings from elsewhere in the research that labour market perspectives in Northern Ireland tend to be very localised (Figure 8.3.2a). 29 per cent would be prepared to travel ten to 20 miles, and 32 per cent would be prepared to travel more than 20 miles. Older people were prepared to travel further than young people, which may reflect that they are likely to attract a higher salary or own a car. Those in rural areas were also prepared to travel further, perhaps reflecting that they are more likely to own a car, and may be more used to having to travel to go about their daily life.

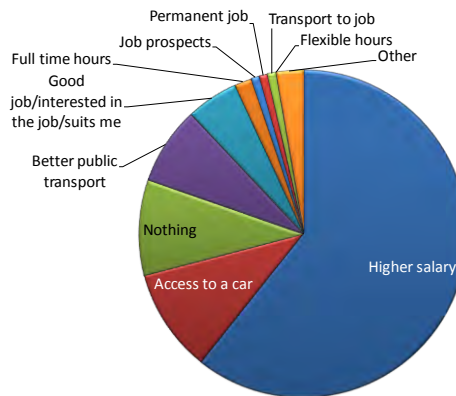
When asked what would encourage them to travel further to work, 71 per cent of interviewees cited a higher salary (Figure 8.3.2b). 21 per cent would be prepared to travel further if they had access to a car or better public transport. 11 per cent of interviewees suggested that nothing would encourage them to travel further to work.

Figure 8.3.2a: What is the maximum distance from your home that you think is reasonable to travel to a place of work?



Source: PIMR Telephone Survey

Figure 8.3.2b: What would encourage you to travel further for employment?

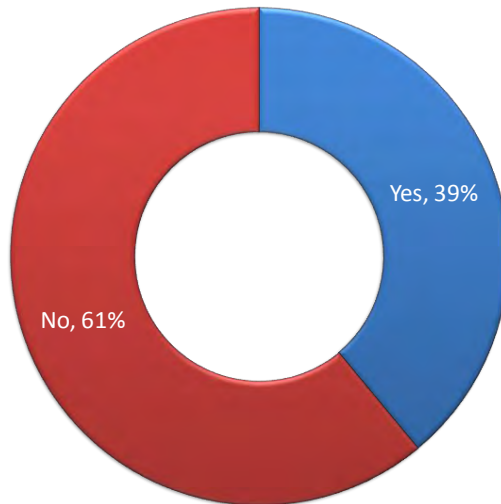


Source: PIMR Telephone Survey

8.3.3 Access to resources

39 per cent of those interviewed have access to a car (Figure 8.3.3). Older interviewees were more likely to have a car: 57 per cent of those aged 50-59 could access a car, compared to 27 per cent of those aged 18-24. Those with a university-level education are also more likely to have car access, as are those living in a rural area (53 per cent, compared to 35 per cent in urban areas).

Figure 8.3.3: Do you have access to a car?



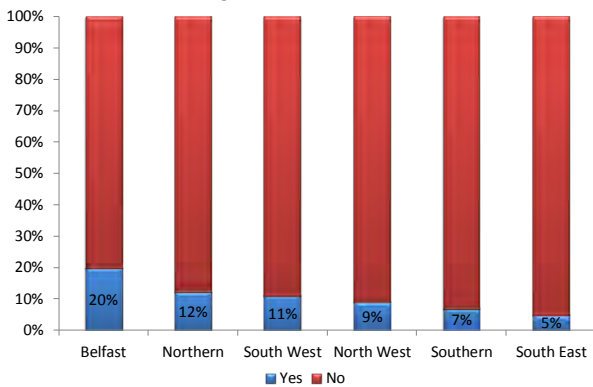
Source: PIMR Telephone Survey

8.3.4 The ‘chill factor’

The telephone survey confirmed the broader findings of the research that the ‘chill factor’ is not an issue for the majority of people in Northern Ireland. Interviewees were asked if there are any areas within a reasonable distance of their home where they would not be willing to work. 89 per cent said there are no such areas. However, within the Belfast workforce development area 20 per cent of interviewees stated that they would not be prepared to take up employment in certain areas (Figure 8.3.4a).

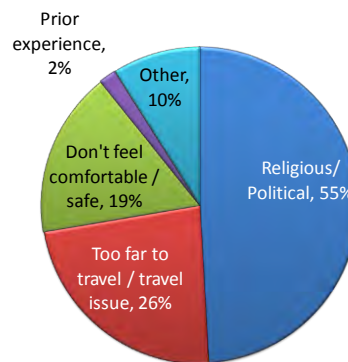
The unskilled (13 per cent) and low skilled (12 per cent) were more likely to answer “yes” to this question than those with a university qualification (6 per cent). Those in urban areas were also more likely to identify areas where they would not work (14 per cent, compared to 6 per cent in rural areas).

Figure 8.3.4a: Are there any areas within a reasonable distance of your home, but where you are not willing to take up employment? By workforce development area



Source: PIMR Telephone Survey

Figure 8.3.4b: Please identify why you would not be willing to take up employment in these areas



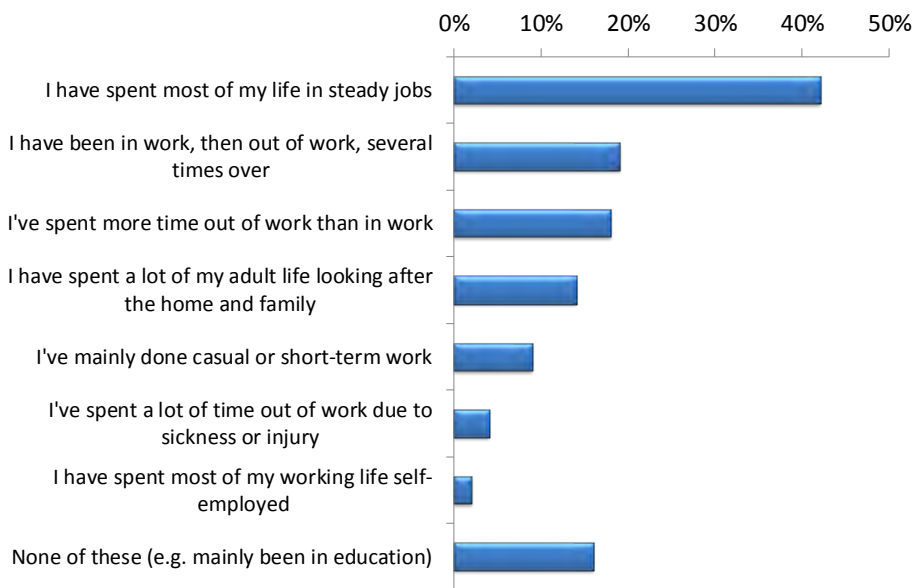
Source: PIMR Telephone Survey

When asked about the reasons why they would not be willing to work in particular areas, 55 per cent quoted religious or political reasons, and 26 per cent suggested it was too far or not easy to travel there (Figure 8.3.4b). Only 19 per cent said it was because they would not feel comfortable or safe. Furthermore, only 2 per cent (or one person) said their reluctance was linked to prior experience.

8.4 Labour market status mobility amongst survey respondents

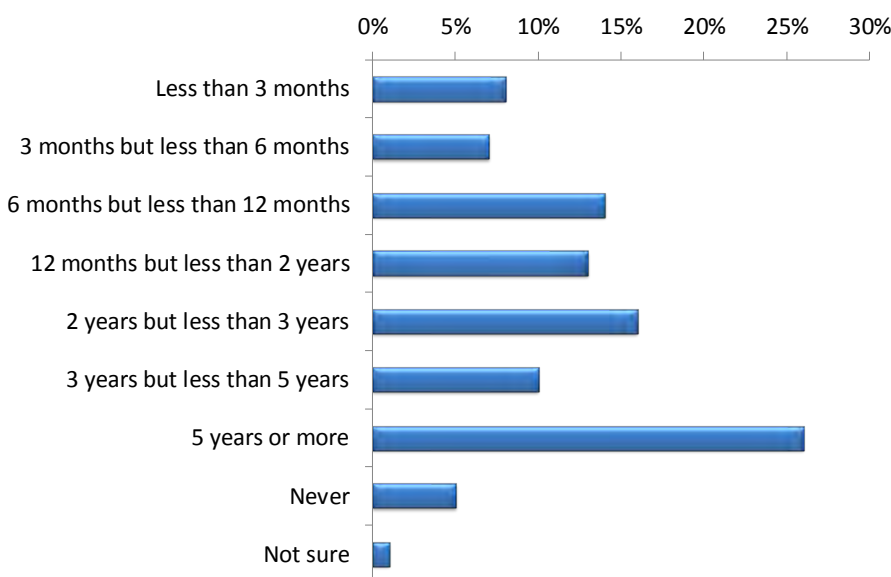
42 per cent of interviewees had spent most of their life in steady jobs, 19 per cent have been in and out of work, and 18 per cent have spent more time out of work than in work (Figure 8.4a). Around one quarter of interviewees had been out of work for five years or more (Figure 8.4b). 36 per cent of females had been out of work for at least five years, compared to 21 per cent of males. Younger people were more likely to have been out of work for shorter periods of time. 49 per cent of Income Support recipients had been out of work for five years or more, compared to 24 per cent of those receiving Job Seeker’s Allowance, who are more likely to have been actively seeking work.

Figure 8.4a: Which of the following describes your current situation since leaving school or college?



Source: PIMR Telephone Survey

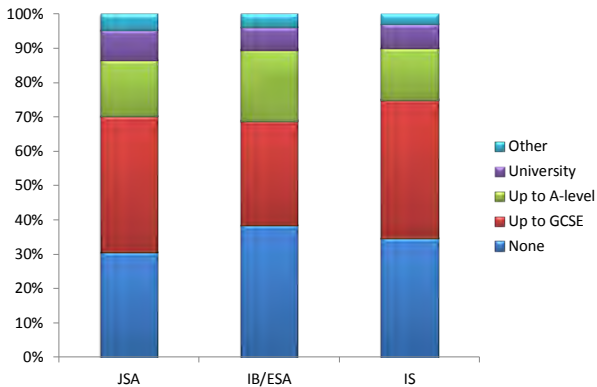
Figure 8.4b: How long has it been since you were last in employment?



Source: PIMR Telephone Survey

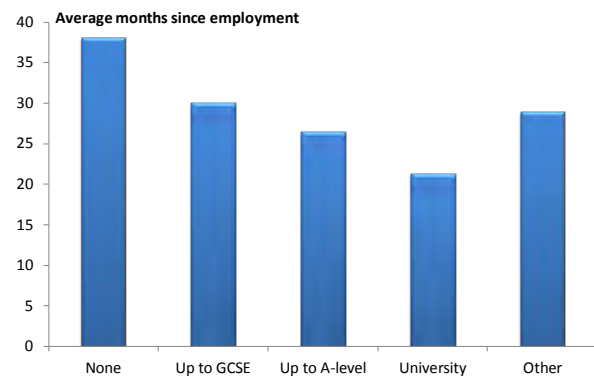
Across all types of benefits, more than two-thirds of interviewees had no skills, or only GCSE level qualifications (9.4c). Nonetheless, around one quarter of interviewees had A Level or University level qualifications, indicating that there is a skilled element of Northern Ireland’s labour force that is not currently being utilised. 9 per cent of those receiving Job Seeker’s Allowance and 7 per cent of those on other benefits are qualified to university level. Those with higher levels of qualifications had generally been out of work for less time (Figure 8.4d).

Figure 8.4c: Highest level of qualification achieved by benefit type



Source: PIMR Telephone Survey

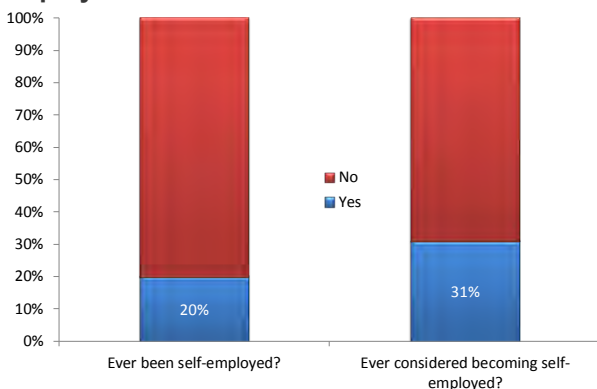
Figure 8.4d: Average time since last employment by highest level of qualification



Source: PIMR Telephone Survey

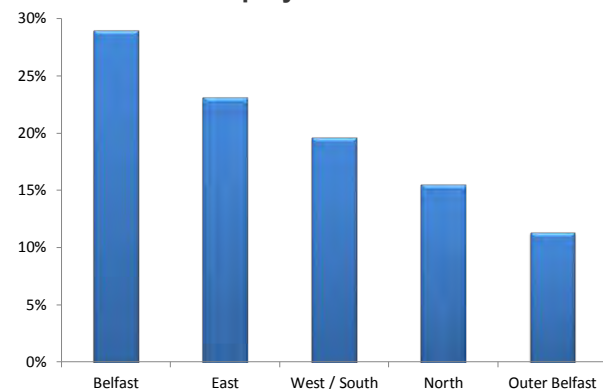
20 per cent of interviewees report having been self-employed at some point, and 31 per cent said they had considered it (Figure 8.4e). Respondents in Belfast and the East of Northern Ireland were most likely to have been self-employed (Figure 8.4f). 26 per cent of males had been self-employed compared to 8 per cent of females. Older respondents were more likely to have been self-employed (39 per cent of those aged 50-59, compared to just 7 per cent of 18-24 year olds). However, amongst those in the youngest age group who have not been self-employed, half say they have considered it.

Figure 8.4e: Have you ever been self-employed or considered becoming self-employed?



Source: PIMR Telephone Survey

Figure 8.4f: Nuts 3 area of people that have been self employed

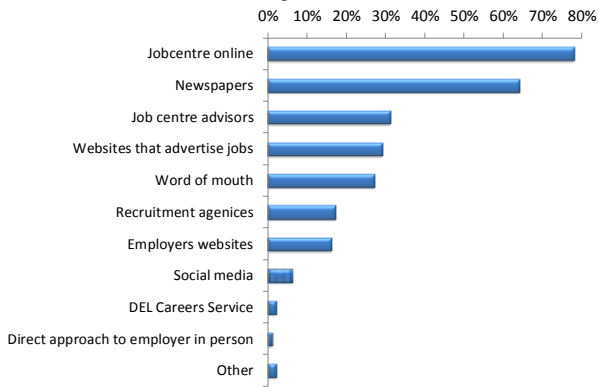


Source: PIMR Telephone Survey

8.5 Drivers of labour market status mobility amongst survey respondents

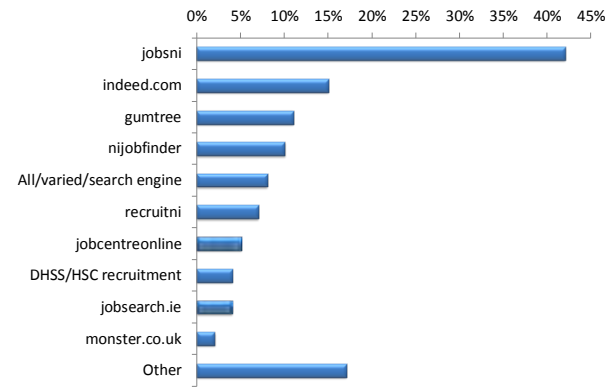
8.5.1 Sources of labour market information

Figure 8.5.1a: Thinking back over the past 3 months, which of the following have you used to obtain information on jobs?



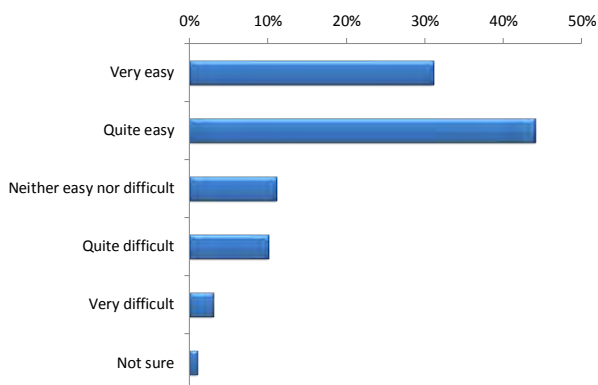
Source: PIMR Telephone Survey

Figure 8.5.1b: What websites have you used to obtain information on jobs in the past 3 months?



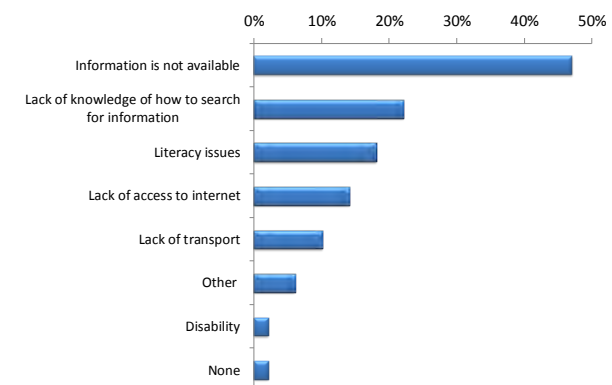
Source: PIMR Telephone Survey

Figure 8.5.1c: How easy or difficult is it to obtain the information you need when searching for a job?



Source: PIMR Telephone Survey

Figure 8.5.1d: If it is difficult to obtain information, what problems do you encounter when looking for information on jobs?

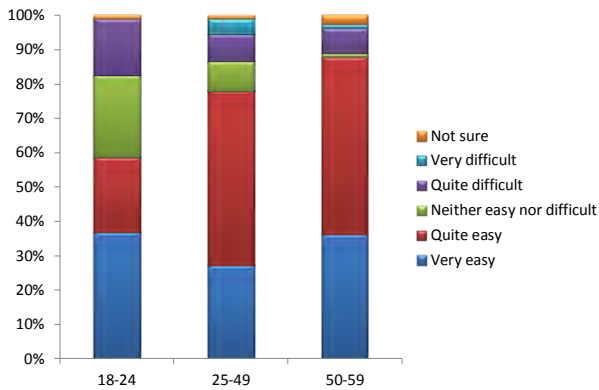


Source: PIMR Telephone Survey

As noted in the analysis of Labour Force Survey data, job centres and newspapers are an important source of labour market information in Northern Ireland. 78 per cent of respondents report using Jobcentre online, 64 per cent have searched newspapers, and 31 per cent have obtained information from job centre advisors (Figure 8.5.1a). The most frequently cited website was NIjobs.com (cited by 42 per cent of those using websites), followed by indeed.com (15 per cent, Figure 8.5.1b). Those in the youngest age group tend to rely on IT more than older respondents, and are also more likely to use websites linked directly to a particular employer. In contrast, older job seekers rely on websites advertising a range of jobs.

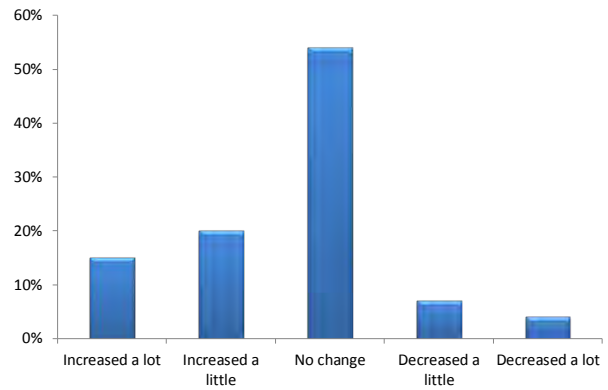
Three quarters of respondents felt it was very or quite easy to find information (Figure 8.5.1c). Amongst those who found it difficult, the most commonly cited reason was that the information required was not available (47 per cent, Figure 8.5.1d). A lack of search skills or literacy issues accounted for a further 40 per cent. 14 per cent of those citing difficulties did not have internet access.

Figure 8.5.1e: How easy or difficult is it to obtain information?



Source: PIMR Telephone Survey

Figure 8.5.1f: To what extent, if at all, has your commitment or motivation to finding work changed as a result of your contact with the job centre advisor?



Source: PIMR Telephone Survey

Job seekers in the two upper age bands are more likely to find it ‘quite easy’ or ‘very easy’ to obtain information, confirming the finding from other parts of the study that some groups of young people may require more specialist support in their job search (Figure 8.5.1e).

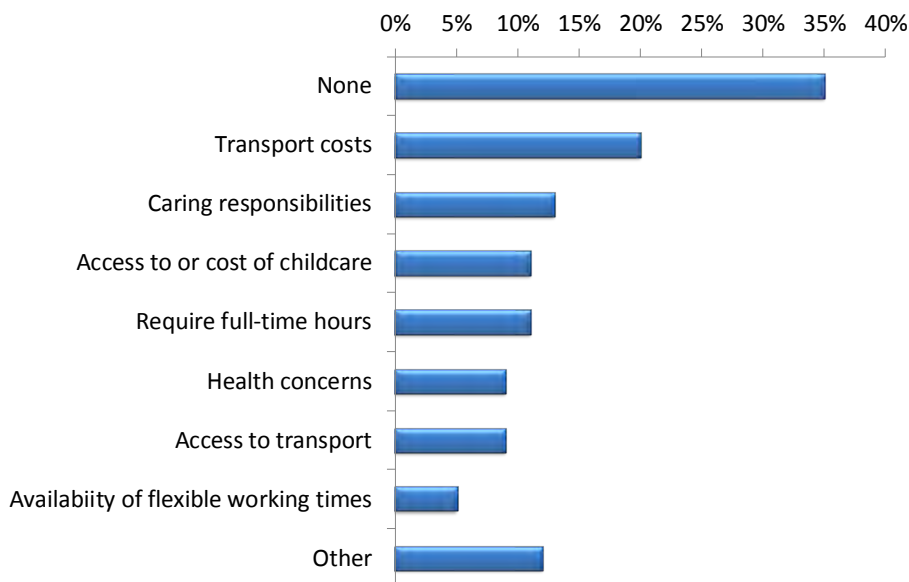
Amongst those who had sought information from a job centre adviser, 54 per cent suggested it had no impact on their commitment or motivation (Figure 8.5.1f). 35 per cent suggested it had increased their motivation either a little or a lot (Figure 8.5.1f). 11 per cent suggested their motivation had decreased as a result of engaging with a job centre advisor.

8.5.2 Household circumstances

35 per cent of interviewees stated that no personal or household circumstances influenced the type of job they applied for (Figure 8.5.2a). 20 per cent said they took into account transport costs, contradicting the finding from the survey question on barriers to employment. Males were twice as likely to take account of transport costs than females. One quarter of respondents cited caring responsibilities or childcare as important influences on the type of jobs they apply for. 11 per cent said they required a full-time job. 27 per cent of females suggested caring responsibilities were an influence on the type of job sought, and 26 per cent mentioned childcare. The percentages were just 6 per cent and 3 per cent respectively for males.

People in the North of Northern Ireland NUTS 3 area were more likely to cite transport costs and access to transport as influences on the jobs they apply for, perhaps reflecting more limited transport links in rural areas.

Figure 8.5.2a: When looking for job opportunities what are the personal or household circumstances that influence the type of jobs you apply for?



Source: PIMR Telephone Survey

8.5.3 Employers' recruitment and selection processes

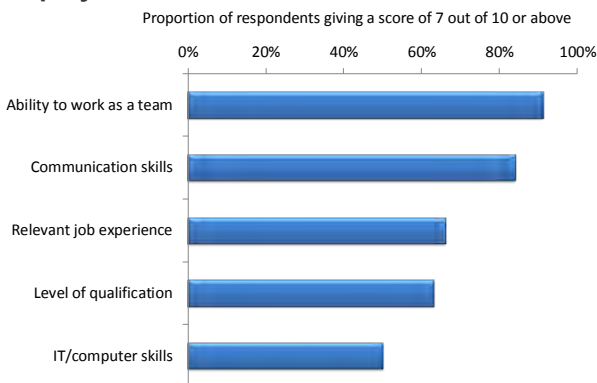
Interviewees showed a good appreciation of the value employers place on soft skills, such as teamworking and communication. Consistent with the evidence from employer interviews, formal qualifications were regarded as less important. However, IT/computer skills were also regarded as less important by interviewees, which contrasted with information provided by one of the employers.

Figure 8.5.3a: Thinking of the jobs you apply to, in your experience how important are each of the following to employers?



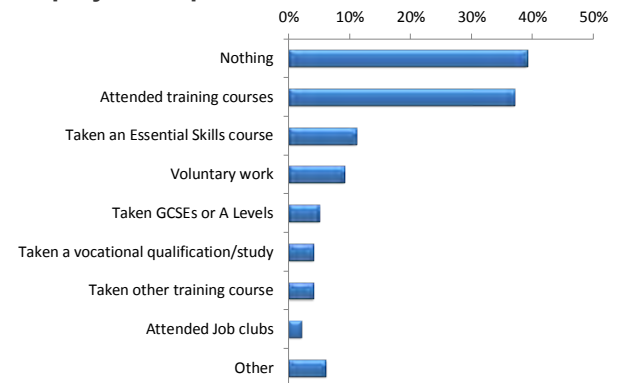
Source: PIMR Telephone Survey

Figure 8.5.3b: In the last job you applied for, to what extent do you think you met the expectations of the employer in each areas?



Source: PIMR Telephone Survey

Figure 8.5.3c: What, if anything, have you done to try to increase your skills to meet employers' expectations?



Source: PIMR Telephone Survey

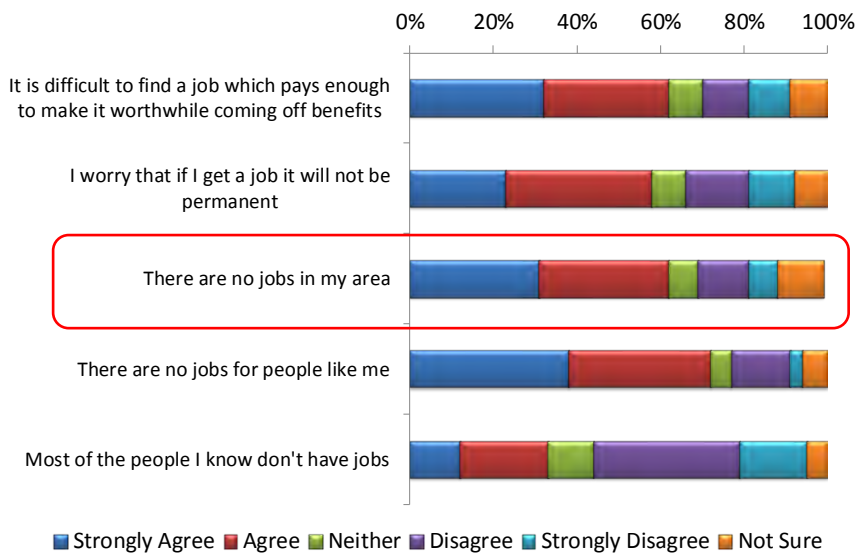
Interviewees were relatively confident that they had met an employer’s expectations in the last job they applied for in terms of team working and communication skills, although they had less confidence in their IT/computer skills. A lack of experience and qualifications was also a concern (Figure 8.5.3b).

37 per cent of respondents reported attending a training course to increase their skills (Figure 8.5.3c), and this figure rose to 46 per cent in the Belfast workforce development area. However, 39 per cent of all respondents said they had done nothing to improve their skills (this figure was as high as 51 per cent in the Southern workforce development area).

8.5.4 Quantity and quality of local jobs

Consistent with evidence from other parts of the study, there was a general degree of pessimism concerning the availability of job opportunities. Almost two-thirds of respondents felt there were no suitable jobs in their area (Figure 8.5.4a). People from the Belfast and East NUTS3 regions were slightly less pessimistic about prospects in their area.

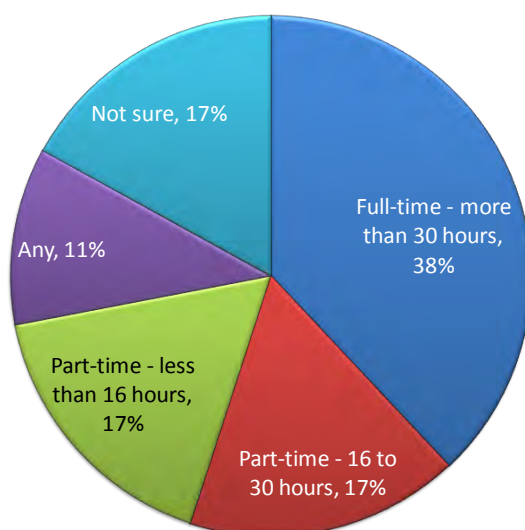
Figure 8.5.4a: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?



Source: PIMR Telephone Survey

In common with the focus group findings, there was a clear preference for full-time work (38 per cent, Figure 8.5.4b). Only 11 per cent of respondents did not have a preference concerning hours of work. 55 per cent of females expressed a preference for part-time work, compared to just 15 per cent of males. 64 per cent of Job Seeker's Allowance claimants stated they were looking for full-time work, and only 15 per cent were looking for part-time work. This most likely reflects the need to earn a full-time wage to compensate for lost Job Seeker's Allowance income.

Figure 8.5.4b: When applying for jobs, what are your preferred hours of work?

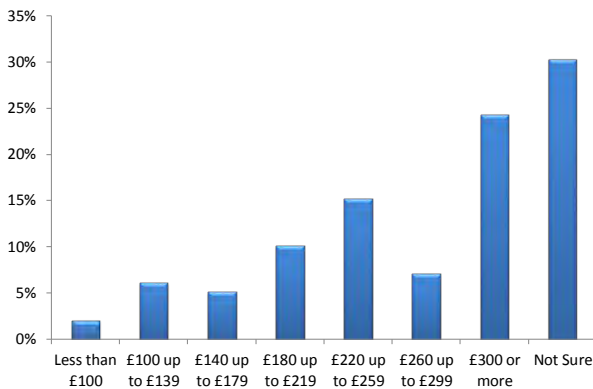


Source: PIMR Telephone Survey

8.5.5 Welfare and institutional factors

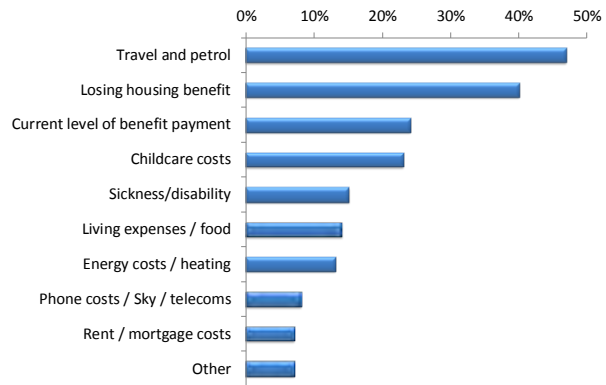
Evidence from the focus groups suggested that the non-employed weigh up the costs and benefits of entering work against the income they receive from being on benefits. Within the survey, almost one quarter of respondents said they would require a wage of £300 per week or more to enter work (Figure 8.5.5a). This figure increases to 39 per cent amongst those receiving Income Support. 30 per cent of all interviewees were not sure what income level would be required for them to take up work. This may reflect that, in contrast to the focus groups with those seeking work, the telephone survey sample included those not working for reasons of sickness or disability, who may be less likely to have weighed up the advantages and disadvantages of work. Indeed, 48 per cent of those on Incapacity Benefit or Employment and Support Allowance responded “not sure” to this question.

Figure 8.5.5a: What is the minimum wage level required to make it worthwhile to come off benefits?



Source: PIMR Telephone Survey

Figure 8.5.5b: What costs do you take into account when making this calculation?

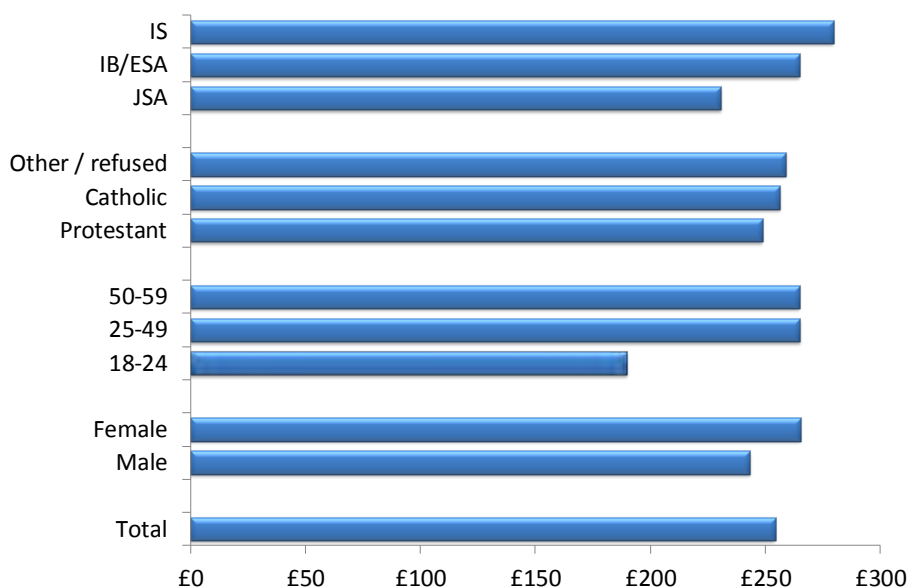


Source: PIMR Telephone Survey

When asked about the costs they take into account when estimating how much they would need to earn to come off benefits, 47 per cent of interviewees identified travel and petrol (Figure 8.5.5b). This percentage rises to 65 per cent amongst those aged 18-24. Consistent with the evidence from focus groups and interviews with job centre staff, lost benefits income was also a common response: 24 per cent cited the current level of benefits they receive, and 40 per cent specifically mentioned housing benefit. Childcare costs were once again an important consideration and were highlighted by 23 per cent of respondents.

Using the mid-points of the ranges shown in Figure 8.5.5a it is possible to estimate the average weekly wage required for different sub-groups (Figure 8.5.5c). This suggests that the minimum wage needed to come off benefits is lower for the youngest age group (£190), compared to £265 for those in older age groups. Those receiving Job Seeker’s Allowance would require an average of £231, compared to £265 for those on Incapacity Benefit or Employment and Support Allowance, or £279 for those on income support.

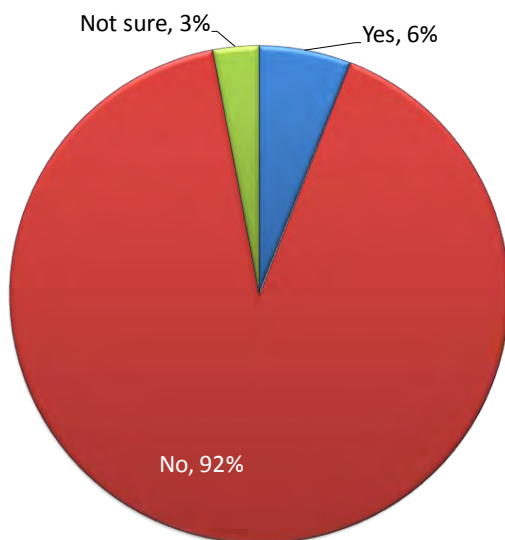
Figure 8.5.5c: What is the minimum wage level you require to make it worthwhile to come off benefits? By Gender, Age, Religious background and Benefit – weighted average³⁸



Source: PIMR Telephone Survey

To help understand if they would be better off in work, job seekers could previously request a 'better off calculation' at their local job centre³⁹. Only 6 per cent of telephone survey interviewees could recall having ever obtained this (Figure 8.5.5d).

Figure 8.5.5d: Have you ever received a 'better off calculation' from your Job Centre or Social Security Office?



Source: PIMR Telephone Survey

³⁸ Assumes range for those responding "£100 or under" is £80 to £100 and range for those responding "more than £319" is £320 to £400

³⁹ 'Better off calculations' have now been replaced by the 'Entitledto' service

9 Evidence on the effectiveness of current policy initiatives

- Previous attempts to take jobs to workers have tended to prove ineffective in Northern Ireland. Employers select the strongest candidates for new jobs, and such candidates may not come from deprived areas or be currently unemployed.
- Stakeholders expressed concerns that the *Steps to Work* programme is often used as a source of cheap labour by employers with little prospect of it leading to a permanent position, although the scheme could be valuable for young people needing to build up their CV. The benefits of participation can fade quickly after a placement ends, so it is important to find another placement soon after.
- JBO/JC staff highlighted the importance of getting young people into a work placement or training quickly after school before they lose the sense of routine, confidence and interpersonal skills they have acquired.
- The wide range of services and support for those with disabilities leads to complexity and many eligible people may not be aware of the full range of support available. Provision is stronger in urban areas and there can be gaps in some rural areas.
- The Work Connect programme for persons with disabilities is working well and exceeding its target for getting people into work. Stakeholders also provided positive feedback on Access to Work, without which many people with disabilities would not be able to enter employment.

9.1 Policy approaches

9.1.1 Types of intervention

The literature review identified that, historically, policies for tackling spatial disparities and improving labour mobility tend to fall into four categories:

- creating jobs in or close to deprived areas (taking jobs to workers). This has been a feature of labour market policy in Northern Ireland in the past;
- improving transport to enable workers to access work (taking workers to jobs);
- supply side interventions, such as initiatives to upskill workers and enhance employability, and equal opportunities legislation, so that potential workers are better able to move into employment; or
- macroeconomic demand management, under the hypothesis that maximising economic growth for a country as a whole will eventually iron out disparities (or at least raise income levels for everyone so that relatively poorer areas may become wealthier, even if there is only limited convergence).

9.1.2 Current policy initiatives in Northern Ireland: macroeconomic measures and employment subsidies

The Executive's Economic Strategy⁴⁰ and Economy and Jobs Initiative⁴¹ are intended to stimulate demand for workers, and enable currently non-employed individuals to move into work. Further initiatives were outlined in *Building a prosperous and united community*⁴².

Invest NI has a Jobs Fund which offers financial support to firms taking on eligible workers. The projects supported by this funding do not generally require higher-level skills and so the initiative is well placed to support the non-employed into work. The Jobs Fund also supports social enterprises which often work with those furthest from the labour market, and supports individuals starting businesses in Neighbourhood Renewal Areas. The Fund was aiming to create 4,000 jobs by March 2014 and promote 6,300 by March 2015, but is running ahead of this target and had actually created 4,177 jobs by December 2013⁴³.

A number of employment subsidy programmes are also in place:

- *Step Ahead 50+* supports long-term unemployed and inactive over-50s in paid employment for 26 weeks in the Community and Voluntary sector
- The *Jobs Fund employer subsidy* provides an incentive for businesses with existing and new employment based projects to recruit disadvantaged workers
- *Enterprise Allowance scheme* provides funding, training and mentoring for individuals to set up new businesses. It is targeted at under-represented groups including women.

⁴⁰ Northern Ireland Executive (2013) Economic Strategy: Priorities for sustainable growth and prosperity, available at: <http://www.northernireland.gov.uk/ni-economic-strategy-revised-130312.pdf>

⁴¹ Northern Ireland Executive (2013) Economy and Jobs Initiative, available at: <http://www.detini.gov.uk/economy-jobs-initiative.pdf>

⁴² Northern Ireland Executive and HM Government (2013) Building a prosperous and united community, available at: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/206979/Building_a_Prosporous_and_United_Community.pdf

⁴³ Source: <http://www.investni.com/news/jobs-fund-performance-good-news-for-local-business--foster.html>

- *Social clauses* in public procurement contracts require contractors to hire disadvantaged workers.

9.1.3 Welfare changes

This research has identified strong evidence for the existence of a 'benefits trap', whereby some non-employed individuals prefer the certainty of benefits incomes to the uncertainty of income from a low-paid job that may not last. The complexity of signing on and off benefits was identified as a clear barrier to employment.

The Welfare Reform Bill is still being debated by the Northern Ireland Assembly. If implemented, it will simplify the benefits and tax credits system, including through the introduction of the Universal Credit for those on low incomes. Of particular relevance to labour market status mobility is that the new unified benefit would allow individuals to keep more of their income as they move into work. There would also be a smoother and more transparent reduction in benefits as wage income increases. It is hoped that this change would help overcome the 'benefits trap' for many individuals.

There is currently a great deal of uncertainty about the impact of Universal Credit in Northern Ireland, if introduced. The Strabane Job Centre staff suggested that because people weigh up their benefits income relative to what they would receive in work, the impact of the Universal Credit policy would depend on whether it reduces benefits relative to wages, and that is currently unclear.

Disability Action commented that Universal Credit are good in theory, but expressed uncertainty about how the change would impact individuals until it is implemented. They pointed out that the move from the Disability Living Allowance (DLA) to the Personal Independence Payment (PIP) is currently a source of stress for some individuals with a disability who are uncertain how their situation will be affected.

9.1.4 Executive strategic framework to tackle economic inactivity

The Northern Ireland Executive's programme for Government 2011-2015 included a commitment for DEL and the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment (DETI) to develop a new strategic framework to tackle inactivity through targeted incentives, skills and training programmes and job creation. The framework was published in December 2013 and set out the objective of moving towards a *"stable and competitive employment rate of over 70 per cent by 2023 through a reduction in the proportion of the working age population classified as economically inactive"*.

The framework is targeted at groups unable to participate in the labour market due to health conditions, disabilities, or family commitments. Initiatives will be categorised under four themes:

- Increasing engagement and support:** promoting the value of work and increasing access to pre-employment and in-work support, including through new innovative pilot projects.
- Increasing opportunities:** increasing opportunities for employment and self-employment for the unemployed and economically inactive, including through new support and incentives for employers to hire inactive individuals and invest in their development.
- Addressing wider barriers:** ensuring societal issues that limit engagement with the labour market are alleviated or removed, including through new measures designed to help specific groups overcome disadvantage.
- Breaking the cycle:** reducing in-flows into inactivity through preventative measures ranging from improved educational attainment to a greater integration of health and work outcomes.

The Strategic Framework document acknowledges there is a lack of comparative evidence on the effectiveness of the types of intervention described in Section 6.1. It therefore proposes testing a limited number of small-scale initiatives to develop new ideas and develop evidence on effectiveness, efficiency and scalability.

9.1.5 Interventions to improve individuals' employability

DEL has an overarching skills strategy, *Success through Skills – Transforming Futures*⁴⁴, which links together the various DEL interventions that aim to increase skills amongst the working age population. An important component of this is the provision of training and opportunities for those who are economically inactive. For example, the *Bridge to Employment* programme offers bespoke support to unemployed and economically inactive individuals to prepare them for specific vacancies. Individuals who successfully complete the course are guaranteed a job interview.

In the area of higher education, DEL has two strategies, *Graduating to Success* and *Access to Success*, which aim to ensure the widest possible number of young people can access and benefit from higher education.

The DSD *Volunteering Strategy* aims to provide work experience to economically inactive individuals, enabling them to gain softer skills that may ultimately help them move into employment.

The DEL Disability Employment Service provides specialist support to those with health conditions or disabilities:

- *Work Connect*: a programme of specialist pre-employment support, leading to employment opportunities and in-work support where necessary.
- *Workable*: provides a tailored package of support, including employee and employer training and a Job Coach to help the individual remain and progress within their job.
- *Access to Work*: provides financial assistance with the costs of employing an individual with a disability, including with travel costs, special equipment, and provision of a support worker.
- *Condition Management Programme* provides support from a healthcare professional to help clients manage their health condition to improve their employability.
- The *Job Introduction Scheme* is a 13-week job trial to enable individuals to try out an employment opportunity. It includes a £75 per-week subsidy to the employer.

The Disability Employment Service is currently finalising a new Disability Employment Strategy.

Individuals with childcare commitments can obtain up to £130 per week support with childcare costs through DEL programmes such as *Steps to Work*, *Steps to Success* and the *Youth Employment Scheme*.

⁴⁴ Department for Employment and Learning, Northern Ireland (2011) *The Skills Strategy for Northern Ireland: Success through Skills – Transforming Futures*, available at: <http://www.delni.gov.uk/success-through-skills-transforming-futures.pdf>

9.2 Evidence on the effectiveness of current policy initiatives

9.2.1 Literature review findings on the effectiveness of policies

The literature review highlighted the recruitment studies by Shuttleworth and Gould (2010)⁴⁵ and Shuttleworth and McKinstry (2001)⁴⁶ which examined the labour market history and background of applicants and appointees to a variety of new or expanding employment sites across Northern Ireland.

The research suggests attempts at spatial targeting of jobs have proved ineffective. Many applicants for jobs created close to deprived areas came from outside those areas. Only 30 per cent of newly-created jobs at a number of expanding sites went to those not previously in work. This means the impact of job creation on the jobless is indirect and difficult to determine. This is perhaps unsurprising when one considers that employers will want to recruit the most suitable employees, regardless of where they come from.

Applicants and appointees at the sites studied tended to be younger than average, and education was an advantage. A study of the 2000/01 Harland and Wolff redundancy found that displaced workers most likely to find new employment were younger; more qualified (in terms of both formal qualification and transferable skills); able to access a car; and tended to own their own house.

Shuttleworth and Green (2009)⁴⁷ argue that there are limits to the economic feasibility of taking jobs to workers in an increasingly integrated global economy.

Gordon (2003)⁴⁸ argues that concentrations of urban unemployment are likely to be a function of person-related factors, rather than local failures of demand. This suggests policy should focus on supply-side measures to help labour and housing markets operate and adjust more smoothly, and measures to promote the upward occupational mobility of people already in employment, freeing up entry-level roles into which unemployed workers might realistically move. Gordon also implies this could focus on improving the skills and attitudes of the non-employed, e.g. by helping those displaced from industrial jobs to gain the 'soft skills' needed for service sector occupations.

This finding is highly relevant to the situation in Northern Ireland, where many of the non-employed are located close to employment centres, but are unable to compete with in-commuters for employment.

It is important to recognise that not all neighbourhoods or individuals are the same. Place-specific factors, community norms and historical factors can all influence the effectiveness of policy interventions. This suggests a need for local flexibility in the design and implementation of policy (Green and White, 2007)⁴⁹.

⁴⁵ Shuttleworth I. and Gould M. (2010) 'Distance between home and work: A multilevel analysis of individual workers, neighbourhoods, and employment sites in Northern Ireland', *Environment and Planning A*, 42: 1221-1238.

⁴⁶ Shuttleworth I. and McKinstry D. (2001) 'What can the large-scale recruitment study tell us about employability?', *Labour Market Bulletin*.

⁴⁷ Shuttleworth I. and Green A. (2009) 'Spatial mobility, workers and jobs: Perspectives from the Northern Ireland experience'.

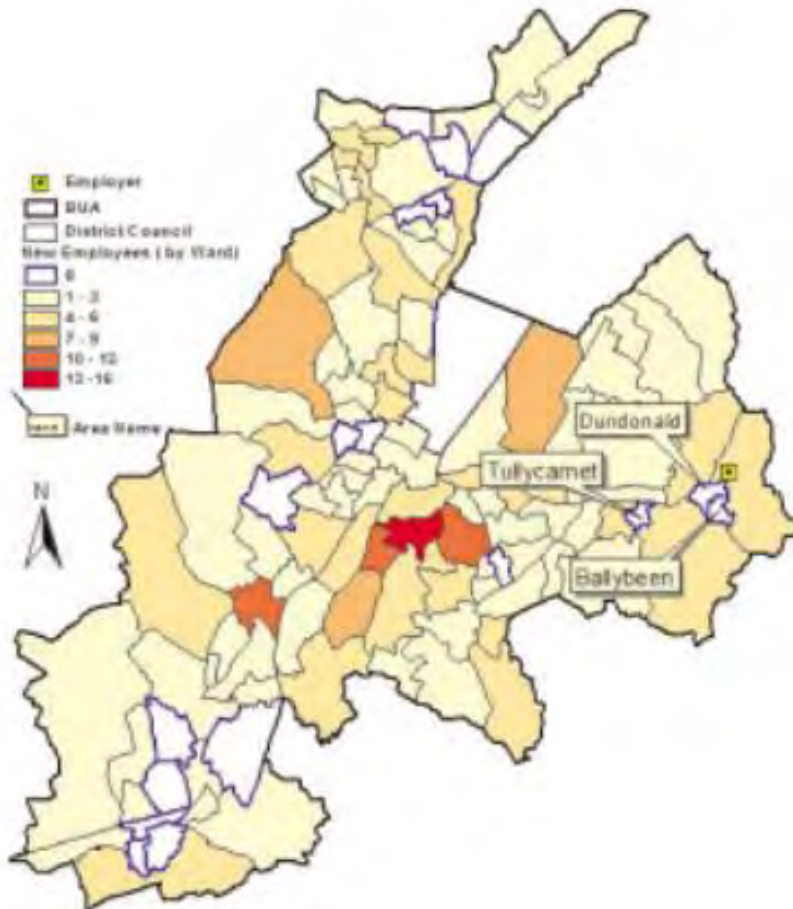
⁴⁸ Gordon I. (2003) 'Unemployment and spatial labour markets' in Martin R. and Morrison P.S. (eds.) *Geographies of Labour Market Inequality*.

⁴⁹ Green A.E. and White R.J. (2007) *Attachment to place: Social networks, mobility and prospects of young people*, Joseph Rowntree Foundation, available at: <http://www.jrf.org.uk/sites/files/jrf/2126-attachment-to-place.pdf>

It may be that those who are most disadvantaged in the labour market possess a combination of characteristics which are negative associated with employment prospects. This suggests a need for policy interventions across domains (e.g. education, health, care provision, employability), and for interventions to be tailored to individuals.

For example, McQuaid et al. (2013)⁵⁰ suggest the need for a multi-pronged approach to promoting employment amongst persons with a disability, e.g. to make employers aware of legislation and support, as well as develop the qualifications and skills of those with a disability.

Figure 9.2.1: Origin of workers at the Halifax call centre⁵¹



⁵⁰ McQuaid R., Graham H., Shapira M. and Raeside R. (2013) DELNI Economic Inactivity Strategy: Literature Review Project, Final Report to the Department for Education and Learning Northern Ireland, available at: <http://www.delni.gov.uk/economic-inactivity-literature-review.pdf>

⁵¹ McKinsty D. and Shuttleworth I. (2002) The Halifax Call Centre: Employer Recruitment Practices & Employability, Labour Market Bulletin 16, 109-116, DEL, Belfast

9.2.2 Consultation evidence on the effectiveness of labour market policies

Consistent with the academic literature, Gingerbread NI remarked that policies that although they have enjoyed success in finding work for lone parents overall, policies that aim to bring new jobs to neighbourhoods with high unemployment rates have had more limited success.

Staff at one JBO/JC suggested *Steps to Work* is proving ineffective. They felt employers often took on individuals under the scheme as a form of cheap labour, and that was very little prospect of a permanent position. This leads scheme participants to question the value of taking part. However, for 18-24 year olds the case for schemes of this type is stronger because they need to build up experience for their CV. Even eight weeks of experience on an empty CV can make a big difference. In some cases the JBO/JC has persuaded an employer to keep on a young person that has proved themselves during the initial eight weeks for a further six months. In some cases individuals have managed to secure permanent jobs.

Staff at another JBO/JC highlighted the importance of finding *Steps to Work* participants a second placement straight after they complete the first one. Otherwise momentum is lost and the confidence and sense of routine gained from the first placement is quickly reversed. However, it is difficult to persuade individuals to go straight into a second placement due to the voluntary nature of the scheme.

At a third JBO/JC, staff reported similar points on *Steps to Work*, and also noted that it is sometimes difficult to persuade the unemployed to volunteer to work for free for an employer (although they do receive an additional £15 per week in benefits). So whilst the scheme may be a stepping stone towards permanent employment, the individual often feels they are being exploited. JBO/JC staff also noted that an eight-week placement will often not make much difference to an individual's CV since a potential employer reviewing it will typically look for at least six months in one job.

JBO/JC staff suggested the old *New Deal* programme offered a better chance for clients to gain experience with an employer (up to six months, compared to two months for most people on *Steps to Work*). However, under the previous *Welfare to Work* programme employers often only received applications from people forced to apply for positions to keep their benefit. The employer then had to spend time interviewing people who had no interest in working.

Staff at one JBO/JC reported that skills development courses tend to work well, perhaps because the young people participating receive an additional £45 per week as well as travel expenses. However, they also reported that those in older age groups complain they are discriminated against because such schemes are not available to them.

JBO/JC staff suggested that young people need to get into a work routine as soon as they leave school, before the benefit culture mind-set sets in. Individuals can be 'lost' to this by the age of 20 and at that point it is very difficult to help them out of it. In some cases individuals may have developed a negative mind-set, lost confidence, and lost interpersonal skills just six months after leaving school. There is therefore a need to get young people onto training programmes and work placements as soon as possible after they leave school.

A range of services and support are available to support the mobility of persons with a disability. However, the number and complexity of the services mean that not all are aware of the help available to help access employment, such as the Disabled Adult Transport Service and Access to Work. So in some cases the factor limiting the mobility of persons with a disability may not be the person's disability itself, but a lack of awareness of the very services that support independence.

Nonetheless, Supported Employment Solutions (SES) reported that the *Work Connect* programme is working well. This was tasked with getting 20 per cent of participants with a disability into work. Currently the outcome is 26-27 per cent. 145 people entered full-time work in the past year. SES also praised DEL's *Workable* programme, which aims to sustain people in employment. This is important for those with a disability, for whom remaining in employment may be as difficult as entering the labour market. The programme provides support and guidance to employers and individuals.

Similarly, Disability Action is supportive of the Access to Work programme which provides financial assistance with the costs of employing an individual with a disability, including with travel costs, special equipment, and provision of a support worker. Disability Action remarked that a number of its clients would not be able to access work without it.

More broadly, Disability Action explained it can be much more difficult for clients in rural areas to find employment. Support services can be a 'patchwork quilt', so where people live can have a big impact on the level of support available. Some areas have many initiatives, others have nothing. A lot of support services are based in Belfast and larger towns, and the supply of work placements for persons with a disability can be much larger in Belfast where there is a critical mass of potential employers.

The Youth Council notes that there was previously a national policy to increase the proportion of young people attending university to 50 per cent. An unintended consequence of this was that those suited to more manual occupations felt they were not valued, and there was a sense of stigma and failure amongst this group.

JBO/JC staff highlighted the impact of new legislation on health and safety. It used to be the case that if somebody needed a Construction Skills Register (CSR) card or forklift license the JBO/JC could arrange the course and help them become more employable. However, now an individual needs a job offer before the JBO/JC can arrange the course. This is problematic for many construction workers and labourers who are blocked out of the labour market because they cannot afford the appropriate course.

At the same time, the JBO/JC staff pointed out that employers cannot afford the insurance required to take on apprentices. This is creating a severe shortage of opportunities for those willing to learn a trade.

JBO/JC staff also suggested that there may be potential to streamline some of the government schemes currently in place. For example, DEL funds the agencies that provide '*Source*', '*LEMIS*' and '*Work Connect*', but there might be efficiencies to be gained from pooling the single funding into a single agency. They also relayed feedback from clients who had complained about the quality of training they had received. Staff suggested such training could be provided in house by the JBO/JC.

9.2.3 Consultation evidence on policies to reduce the 'chill factor'

The Institute for Conflict Research (ICR) observed that access between residential areas and Belfast city centre has improved, and people view the city centre as a 'safe environment' where anyone can work. This should be regarded as a significant success. Similarly, the Community Relations Council (CRC) highlighted that city-wide events can help create a joint sense of ownership of the city as a whole. For example, the City of Culture status of Derry~Londonderry has reinforced the view that politically motivated attacks are an attack on 'our' city, rather than on a specific target. According to the CRC, this kind of approach has also been applied to the issue of parades and may have helped Catholic members of society to become more at ease watching Protestant parades in Derry~Londonderry.

At the same time, the ICR believes Belfast has not obtained the fullest benefit from some schemes. For example, areas such as the docklands development are also perceived as safe by people from all religious backgrounds, but their location in the north-eastern part of the city means they are difficult to reach for residents of some deprived areas and they are not always regarded as potential employment locations. Improved transport links could help address this specific issue, and also more broadly change perceptions of distance and help shape new travel and social patterns in Belfast.

The ICR suggests building on the success achieved in the centre of Belfast to disseminate employment growth to other areas. It believes sites in the north and west of Belfast, such as the Mackies site and the G Barracks site could become employment centres. There have already been local campaigns to call for jobs and investment at the former Matthews site on the Springfield Road. The ICR suggests such developments would create a better balance between residents and employment in these areas, and would create a base for improving relations as people from both religious backgrounds came into contact with each other in a work setting.

However, any efforts to develop employment sites should take into account whether there is a realistic prospect of attracting employers to the area and, if that is possible, whether jobs would actually be taken by local residents. Employers will only move to a site if it aligns with the needs of their business, and they will select the best workers for the posts available, regardless of where they live.

The CRC highlights that there are small social economy enterprises operating in interface areas that employ people from both sides of the divide in places such as New Life, Shankill Women's Centre, Small Wonders Childcare, and Trademark. Such initiatives provide activities and training at weekends. These initiatives were not set up with the goal of improving community relations, but this has been one of the benefits they have generated.

The ICR highlighted that schools also have an important role to play. For example, a school advising children not to walk home by a certain route may make the child and their parents wary of the area and create a sense of fear. Depending on the actual risk to individuals, it may be helpful to avoid reinforcing fear in this way.

The University of Ulster's study on 'Breaking Down Barriers'⁵² identified that neutrality in the workplace and in the surrounding environment (such as the absence of graffiti) were important in encouraging people to work in other areas.

Increasing trust between people from different backgrounds, improving their safety and regenerating interface areas can ultimately help create conditions to permit interface barriers to be removed, reducing segregation and creating more opportunities. The CRC reported that in one case where this was achieved it had to work with the community to reduce frictions by encouraging people of all ages and backgrounds to come together. This was ultimately successful and has laid foundations for further integration. In some cases, new infrastructure can be used to physically link groups from different cultures. In one location there is a proposal to build a footbridge to join Protestant and Catholic groups. The Peace Bridge in Derry~Londonderry provides another example of this.

⁵² Hargie O. Dickson D. and O'Donnell A., University of Ulster School of Communication (2006) Breaking Down Barriers: Sectarianism, Unemployment, and the Exclusion of Disadvantaged Young People from Northern Ireland Society, available at: <http://www.socsci.ulster.ac.uk/comms/research/reports/report.pdf>

10 Areas for further research

10.1 Areas for further research

Ward level commuting flows from the 2011 Census had not been published at the time the research was undertaken. Nonetheless, this information could provide important additional insights, particularly into the religious background aspects of mobility. It is recommended that this extension to the analysis is taken forward as soon as the data become available.

The research has shown that longer distance moves are not an effective labour market adjustment mechanism in Northern Ireland. However, there is a need for further research in this area, for example to analyse the factors that tie people to certain places and assess why these may be stronger in Northern Ireland than in other parts of the UK; and to determine whether other types of mobility, such as weekly commuting, might be a viable substitute for moving house for certain types of individual.

The consultations undertaken for this research have only scratched the surface of recent developments in employer recruitment practices. Further research could usefully undertake a more detailed and wide-ranging review of this topic.

The UK Department for Business Innovation and Skills has recently commissioned research into the impact of skills and training interventions on the unemployed⁵³. There remains an evidence gap in this area: previous research has tended to focus on the employed, and has not assessed the impact of training on the likelihood of benefit claimants entering work. DEL should keep a close eye on the findings of this work as they emerge.

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<https://online.contractsfinder.businesslink.gov.uk/Common/View%20Notice.aspx?site=1000&lang=en¬iceid=1259702&fs=true>

Annex A: Literature review

INTRODUCTION

This document sets out key findings from a review of the academic and policy literature on labour mobility, with a specific focus on such mobility as it pertains to Northern Ireland. The review is divided into four sections. The first section discusses the concept of labour mobility and presents a working definition of labour mobility for the purposes of this research. The second section presents an overview of the factors driving labour mobility, while the third section discusses the experience in Northern Ireland, with reference to key factors in the framework presented in the previous section. The fourth section discusses implications for policy and highlights topics where subsequent primary data collection phases of the project might be best focused.

1. WHAT IS LABOUR MOBILITY?

1.1 Introduction and definitional issues

A key concern for policy at sub-national, national and international levels is the role of labour mobility in **reducing unemployment** and facilitating **access to employment**. Amongst other factors, the European Union's Growth Strategy, Europe 2020, is concerned with increasing employment rates, raising participation and attainment levels in education and making growth inclusive by fighting poverty and social exclusion.⁵⁴ Since the financial and economic crisis of 2008 there has been increasing focus on the role of labour mobility in achieving these aims (CEDEFOP, 2011; Holland and Paluchowski, 2013). Likewise at sub-national scale there are concerns about how, at intra-regional and intra-urban scales, economic efficiency, growth and inclusion may be enhanced by linking those outside the labour market to local (and non-local) jobs.

The concept of **employability** underlies these policy concerns of reducing unemployment and improving access to employment. There are competing definitions of employability, but in broad terms it may be defined as *gaining, sustaining and progressing in employment* (Green et al., 2013). Employability is itself dynamic, indicating that 'mobility' (broadly defined) is an element in employability. This suggests that a possible **working definition of labour mobility** could be: **employment-related moves**. This definition excludes occupational/social mobility between and within generations, which falls outside of the scope of the current study.

1.2 Labour market status mobility and geographic mobility

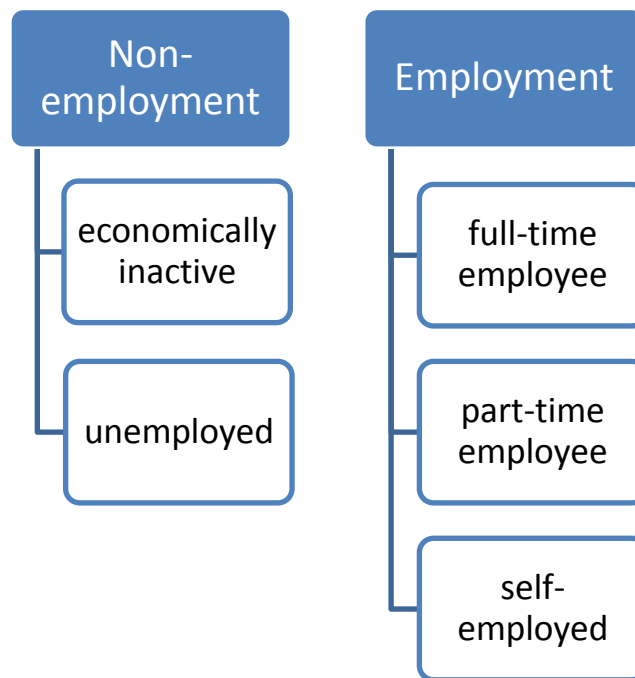
For the purposes of this research, **two main aspects of labour mobility** have been identified as being of particular interest: **(1) labour market status mobility** – involving moves *into* or *towards* employment; and **(2) geographic mobility** – which encompasses that subset of all moves which are linked directly or indirectly to employment. These types of mobility are outlined in greater detail in the remainder of this section. However, it should be borne in mind that together these types of moves represent a subset of total labour mobility, as explained below.

First considering **labour market status mobility**, the *primary emphasis* here is on *moves between non-employment and employment* (see Figure 1) – i.e. from economic inactivity (encompassing the

⁵⁴ http://ec.europa.eu/europe2020/europe-2020-in-a-nutshell/targets/index_en.htm (accessed 27/10/13).

long-term sick or disabled, those looking after the family/ home, students, retired and others – who may or may not be seeking work at the current time) to employment, and from unemployment to employment. *Secondary emphasis* could be on *moves between employment status categories* – i.e. from economic inactivity to unemployment (and vice versa), and transitions between full-time employee, part-time employee and self-employed statuses. Moves *within* employment status categories (e.g. inter-occupational moves [occupational mobility] and inter-sectoral moves [sectoral mobility] are not considered here, even though they might be expected to comprise a relatively large share of total labour mobility.⁵⁵

Figure 1: Labour market status categories of interest for the research



Secondly, the definition⁵⁶ of **geographic mobility** used here is **the ability of people to access locations of employment**. Key generic issues here are: (1) the spatial configuration of workplaces/ workspaces⁵⁷ relative to residences; (2) transport networks linking residences and workplaces/ workspaces; and (3) access to transport (at requisite times) to get to employment locations.

Geographic mobility subsumes moves at a range of spatial scales, from the local to the international. Given that the title of the research is 'Labour Mobility in Northern Ireland' the *primary emphasis* is on employment-related moves *within* Northern Ireland (as opposed to moves across the Northern Ireland border).

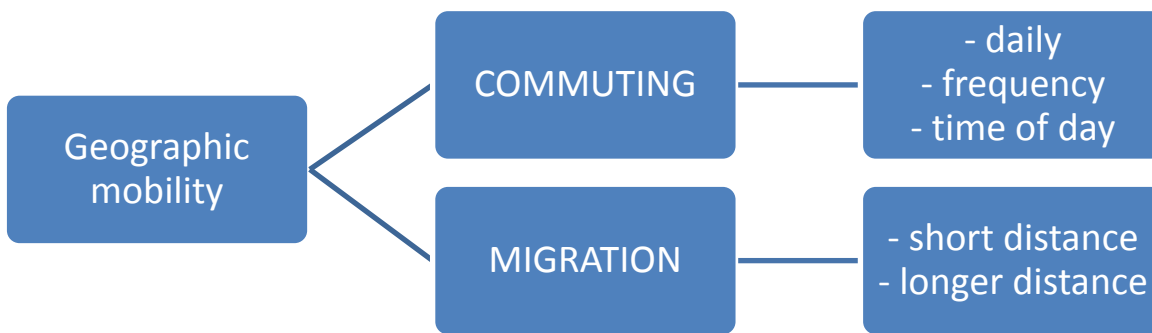
Geographic mobility takes two main forms: commuting and migration (see Figure 2). Commuting is associated with journeys-to-work (conventionally on a daily basis), while migration involves a change of residence. Here the *primary emphasis* is on *commuting*, given the scale of Northern Ireland.

⁵⁵ See some of the later observations in section 3 drawn from the large-scale recruitment study in Northern Ireland.

⁵⁶ This definition is taken from the PID.

⁵⁷ The term 'workspace' is used alongside the more conventional 'workplace' in recognition of the fact that paid work can be undertaken at home, at a workplace or on the move (see Felstead, 2012).

Figure 2: Main types of geographic mobility



Although Figure 2 suggests that there is a clear distinction between the two types of geographic mobility, there is indicative evidence (albeit a relative lack of statistics) on ‘in between behaviour’ such as long distance weekly commuting and short-term assignments (the latter involving temporary stays away from the main place of residence) (Green et al., 2009). It is possible that commuting can substitute for migration (Green et al., 1999). Indeed, using data from Sweden suggests that accessibility to job openings in surrounding regions significantly increases the likelihood of choosing commuting as the geographic mode as opposed to migration (Eliasson et al., 2003).

While commuting journeys are related to employment, this need not be the case for migration. Migration may be motivated by a number of different reasons, with housing-related mobility dominating. In general, most short distance moves are housing market related, while longer distance moves tend to be disproportionately labour market related (Clark and Huang, 2004).

1.3 Is labour mobility necessarily a ‘good’ thing?

Labour mobility – especially commuting - need not necessarily be interpreted *positively* in economic terms especially from environmental and community perspectives. *Churn* into and out of employment (often associated with the ‘no pay, low pay’ cycle [Shildrick et al., 2010]) may be associated with weak employability and poor quality jobs, with limited scope for progression (McQuaid et al., 2013). Flexibility appears to be an increasing feature of labour markets – but it is important to distinguish between different types of flexibility, the segments of the labour market in which it is most prevalent, and ‘for whom’ flexibility operates (i.e. for [some] workers, for employers or both). Likewise high levels of geographic mobility may be inefficient and associated with a lack of cohesion and weakening of social capital. There are thus some reasons for arguing that spatial mobility has some significant downsides and is not always beneficial. However, there is a wide consensus that the benefits of geography mobility outweigh the costs. As will be shown later using Northern Ireland examples, greater spatial mobility in the labour market is associated with increased chances of making a successful transition into employment, and wider spatial horizons for job search appear to be equally beneficial. The observations mirror the experiences noted in the broader literature and are relevant to wider arguments. The concept of ‘spatial mismatch’ has been highly influential (and contested) in urban and labour market studies for over forty years. It explains spatial concentrations of unemployment and joblessness in terms of a mismatch between the location of these groups of people and the locations of jobs. Originally used to account for persistent unemployment amongst Black people in the United States (where it is argued that jobs are spatially inaccessible) the same analysis can be extended to other nations. In these terms there are two possible solutions – (a) to bring jobs to the geographical concentrations of joblessness or (b) to encourage the jobless to move to where the jobs are.

Solution (a) has been attempted in Northern Ireland where job location in or near deprived areas has been encouraged. Its success has been limited because of the spatial leakage of jobs beyond these areas but other reasons apart from this not to follow this policy choice have been advanced. These reasons include the reliance of communities on jobs brought in from outside, the lack of flexibility this entails, and the restricted range of opportunities that can be accessed by those with limited spatial horizons. Localism may also work against social mixing and the sharing of space by different religious groups.

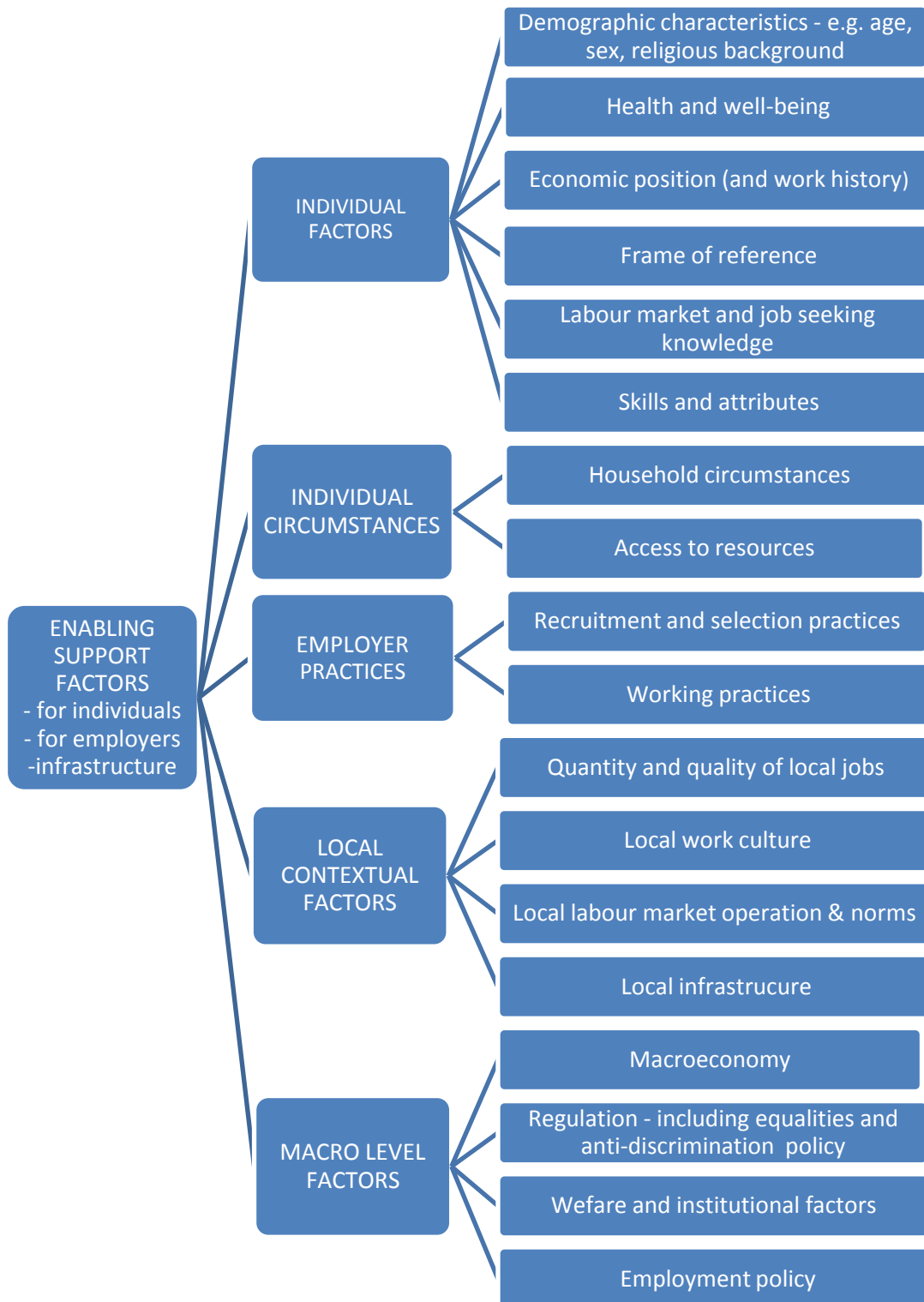
Solution (b) – to promote mobility – is therefore the choice for most policymakers. Greater spatial mobility permits a wider range of opportunities to be accessed across urban systems and labour market areas, it leads to greater economic resilience since if jobs are lost in a locality, jobseekers can find alternative jobs across a wider range of places, and it also in theory leads to greater social mixing when people are broken out of the ‘neighbourhood containers’ where otherwise they would spend most of their lives.

2. WHAT DRIVES LABOUR MOBILITY?

2.1 Introduction

In this section an adapted version of an employability framework devised by Green et al. (2013) (see <http://ipts.jrc.ec.europa.eu/publications/pub.cfm?id=6059>) is used to categorise key factors driving labour mobility (see Figure 3).

Figure 3: Framework for discussing factors relating to labour mobility



Source: adapted from Revised Employability Framework in Green et al. (2013)

On the left-hand side of the diagram overarching *enabling factors* (of specific relevance for policy actors – so for discussion in section 4) are identified), and then in the middle panel of the diagram *individual factors*, *individual circumstances*, *employer practices*, *local contextual factors* and *macro level factors* impinging on labour mobility are identified. Component elements of these are highlighted in the right hand panel of the diagram. The discussion in this section is organised

under the headings in the middle panel. But before this, some suggested drivers and obstacles to mobility (in terms of spatial mobility and access to employment) are summarised in Table 1:

Table 1: Suggested key drivers and obstacles to mobility

| Factor | Positive | Negative | Unclear |
|--|--|---|----------------------|
| <i>Demographic characteristics</i> | Male, Younger people | Female, older people | Religious background |
| <i>Health and well being</i> | Healthier people | Less healthy people | |
| <i>Economic position</i> | Employed, history of employment | Unemployed or inactive, history of joblessness | |
| <i>Labour market and job-seeking knowledge</i> | Wider perceptual horizons | Restricted spatial horizons | |
| <i>Skills and attributes</i> | Higher skills, more qualifications | Lower skills, less or no qualifications | |
| <i>Household circumstances</i> | Others working in the household | Others not working in the household | |
| <i>Access to resources</i> | Access to a car or van | No access to private transport | |
| <i>Recruitment and selection practices</i> | Formal recruitment practices | Informal recruitment practices and 'word of mouth' | |
| <i>Working practices</i> | Stable long-term work | Unstable short-term work | |
| <i>Quantity and quality of local jobs</i> | | | Many local jobs |
| <i>Local work culture and norms</i> | Free access to work with no social barriers | Traditions and practices of restriction (e.g. the chill factor) | |
| <i>Local infrastructure</i> | Good public transport and infrastructure to permit mobility (e.g. good road network) | Poor public transport, congested poor roads | |
| <i>Macroeconomy</i> | Jobs growth | Jobs decrease | |
| <i>Regulation</i> | Effective legislation to encourage labour mobility (e.g. employment equality) | Ineffective or no legislation | |
| <i>Welfare and employment policy</i> | Measures to support spatial mobility and transitions into work | Weak labour market and welfare policy | |

2.2 Individual factors

Demographic characteristics: Analysis of inter-regional migration in Sweden shows that single people are more geographically mobile than others, and are also particularly more likely to migrate (Eliasson et al., 2003). Young adults (especially those in their twenties) tend to be amongst the most geographically mobile in terms of migration, especially if they have higher level qualifications. In terms of commuting, the relationship between age and commuting times/ distances is less clear

cut. It has been argued that travel-to-work times increase with age, associated with an increase in marketable skills facilitating job search over a wider area. By contrast, other scholars have found a negative relationship between age and travel-to-work times, arguing that increased skills associated with age allowed older people to compete successfully for local jobs (see McQuaid, 2009). Disaggregation by gender reveals that women have shorter commutes than men – by distance and commuting time. However, as pointed out by McQuaid and Chen (2011), women are not a homogeneous group. They suggest that underlying simple gender differences in commuting times are other individual factors (such as age, qualifications and experience), job characteristics (including wage levels and occupational segregation), household characteristics and relationships (including access to vehicles and the sharing [or otherwise] of caring responsibilities within the household), and local factors (such as housing characteristics, the availability of public transport and geographical context). While analyses of commuting times suggest that there are important links between caring responsibilities, part-time work and pay, the wider factors mentioned above also play a role. This suggests that in understanding geographic mobility it is important to look at the key factors driving mobility outlined in Figure 3 alongside one another. These are general themes which operate in Northern Ireland as well as in other societies, but in Northern Ireland religious factors also operate. In the schematic framework in Figure 3 these factors fall naturally into the demographic factors box but also into other areas such as work culture.

Health and well-being: Persons with disabilities have higher than average inactivity rates. Yet amongst persons with disabilities there are variations in employment rates: three-quarters of people with tertiary level education are in employment, compared with one-third of persons with disabilities without qualifications (McQuaid et al., 2013). Findings from the Life Opportunities Survey show that 43 per cent of persons with disabilities cited a health condition, illness or impairment as a barrier to employment, compared with 10 per cent without one or more impairments (cited in McQuaid et al., 2013). Persons with disabilities also cited many other barriers to employment, including being more likely to have difficulties with transport, lack qualifications and skills and suffer from anxiety and lack of confidence than their non-impaired peers.

Economic position (and work history): Of relevance to labour market status mobility (and specifically mobility within employment), is intra-generational mobility, which measures how much of an individual's life outcome is determined by his or her economic and social status at an earlier time in life. Analyses by Savage (2011) show that chances of making a significant move up or down in the earnings ladder was low in the 1990s and 2000s for those aged in their thirties and early forties. However, there was an increase in the number of people moving up the earnings ladder in the 2000s compared with the 1990s, but this was concentrated amongst men rather than women, and amongst those in the middle of the earnings distribution rather than those at either end. Earlier analyses of changes in earnings inequality and mobility by Dickens and McKnight (2008), covering the period from the late 1970s to the mid-2000s, showed falling mobility in the 1980s and 1990s, but some increase in mobility from the early 2000s. Their analyses revealed that there was a greater degree of movement between the lower end of the earnings distribution and subsequent non-employment. The lack of mobility at either end of the earnings distribution helps explain persistent spatial unevenness in economic fortunes of individuals, and suggests that poor early labour market experience amongst young people (which tends to be particularly apparent in a recessionary context) can have a scarring effect (Bell and Blanchflower, 2011), perhaps characterised by 'churning' between low paid employment and non-employment.

Evidence on inter-regional migration in Sweden indicates that experience of unemployment increases the likelihood of geographic mobility, but that being economically inactive reduces the likelihood of geographic mobility (Eliasson et al., 2003). In relation to commuting, full-time

employment is consistently associated with longer commutes than part-time employment (McQuaid and Chen, 2011).

Frame of reference: Research on international migration has highlighted the role played by different frames of reference of migrants and indigenous workers in explaining variations in willingness to take jobs at the lower end of the labour market which may be deemed undesirable (Green, Atfield et al., 2013). Frames of reference are shaped by previous experience and current and future goals.

Self-efficacy (i.e. an individual's belief in his/ her ability to achieve goals) impacts on labour market status mobility. Individuals who believe that they may be discriminated against by employers on the basis of individual characteristics/ attributes and/or who believe that there are no jobs available (especially for people like them) are likely to have greater difficulty in finding and sustaining employment than those individuals who do not share such beliefs (McQuaid et al., 2013).

In relation to geographic mobility, previous experience of geographic mobility increases the likelihood of inter-regional mobility (Eliasson et al., 2003). This is in accordance with the literature on 'chronic mobility' and 'cumulative inertia' (Gleave and Sellens, 1984).

Labour market and job-seeking knowledge: Over the medium-term there have been significant changes in the profile of employment and also in the ways that jobs are advertised, including increased use of the internet for job search and recruitment (Green et al., 2012). Green et al.'s (2012) analyses show that employed job seekers are more likely to use the internet for job search than those in other economic status categories, and that older people and those without qualifications are least likely to use the internet for job search. More generally, individuals with poor/ out-of-date job seeking knowledge and advice, especially when coupled with other facets of disadvantage are likely to be disadvantaged in terms of labour market status mobility; (hence the role of special recruitment measures amongst some large local employers – as outlined in section 3). Issues of a lack of job seeking knowledge tend to be greatest for 'newcomers' (especially international migrants); consequently they may end up in less skilled occupations for which they are over-qualified (CEDEFOP, 2011).

Skills and attributes: People with no qualifications are less likely to be in employment than those with higher level qualifications (McQuaid et al., 2013), particularly in depressed local labour markets (Green and Owen, 2006). The scope for mobility from non-employment into employment and within employment is more constrained for those with poor skills than for those with higher-level skills. This is because jobs demanding higher-level skills are open only to people with higher-level skills (or those felt by employers to have the potential to be trained to fill such jobs). Jobs demanding only low-level skills are open to people with poor skills and to people with higher-level skills – if they are willing to 'bump down' in the labour market to fill them; (and research suggests that some individuals are overeducated for the jobs they fill as a matter of choice, perhaps because the jobs concerned have perceived compensating advantages in terms of locational preferences or absence of job pressures [Mavromaras et al., 2009]). This means that, in terms of absolute numbers of jobs, those with poor skills have a smaller pool of jobs available to them.

The probability of geographic mobility is positively associated with the level of education (Eliasson et al., 2003) and with occupation (McQuaid, 2009). Partly these relationships may be due to pay differentials (longer journeys are more worthwhile the higher the rate of pay). A further factor may be that there are fewer local opportunities for higher level/ professional jobs, so necessitating a longer commute. Individuals with poor skills face more constraints on geographic mobility than their more highly skilled counterparts, and so are more reliant on local opportunities (Green and Owen, 2006). Low rates of pay in less skilled jobs mean that it is not worth travelling so far for such an employment opportunity than one with a higher rate of pay.

2.3 Individual circumstances

Household circumstances: Parental background exerts a strong influence on educational attainment and on earnings in employment (Savage, 2011). This suggests that inter-generational mobility in employment is limited. Caring responsibilities also affect employment decisions, with a negative association between hours spent caring and probability of paid employment (McQuaid et al., 2013).

Household circumstances more generally also impinge on geographic mobility. Where there are dependent children in the household, women tend to commute less and men tend to commute more (McQuaid and Chen, 2011), reflecting uneven caring responsibilities within households, with mothers taking on a disproportionate share of the burden.

Housing market factors play a role too. Research by McQuaid (2009) on the travel to work limits of parents showed that longer willingness to commute (specifically commuting journeys of at least an hour) was associated with owner occupation, compared with those in the private or social rented sectors. At face value, this may reflect the greater need to maintain income amongst home owners, and the greater difficulty of migrating than for residents in the private rented sector. However, McQuaid (2009) found that when other factors were introduced into his model the relationship no longer held.

Access to resources: In terms of *transport*, there is clear evidence that lack of access to a car is associated with relatively short commuting journeys. Access to private transport opens up possibilities for wider job search, while dependence on public transport restricts geographical search areas in line with the spatial and temporal availability of such transport. In some instances a 'catch-22' syndrome of 'no car, no job; no job, no car' may prevail (Green and Owen, 2006). Access to private transport is of particular importance in rural area where job opportunities are sparser; (McQuaid [2009] found that residents of small towns and rural areas were willing to commute for longer than those in large urban areas).

Another aspect of access to resources of relevance for understanding labour market status and geographic mobility is *social networks*. In a study focusing on young people in three deprived urban neighbourhoods in England, Green and White (2007) highlight how social networks of friends and family can have positive or negative effects on labour mobility. Friends and family may encourage young people to pursue labour market opportunities and facilitate take up of such opportunities. Conversely, social networks may have negative effects when they act to reduce ambition and to curtail choices (regarding employment and training) to familiar options and locations. However, some individuals (especially low income parents in insecure jobs) may be tied to local opportunities because of reliance on informal social networks for support with caring responsibilities (Dean and Shah, 2002). In such circumstances social networks may facilitate labour market status mobility from non-employment to employment. They may also facilitate geographic mobility in terms of longer commutes – since informal childcare is more flexible than formal childcare (McQuaid, 2009).

2.4 Employers' practices

Recruitment and selection practices: Some groups of the population may face, or perceive that they face, discrimination in the labour market, so reducing chances of moving from non-employment to employment (McQuaid et al., 2013). Such (perceived) discrimination may be on the grounds of disability, age, ethnicity, area of residence, amongst other factors. Field experiments in Great Britain have shown that net discrimination in favour of white names over equivalent

applications from ethnic minority candidates (Wood et al., 2009), while in the case of area discrimination no significant difference was found in positive response rates between neighbourhoods with poor and bland reputations (Tunstall et al., 2012).

Working practices: Research indicates that at the lower end of the labour market job seekers may be seeking permanent full-time jobs, whereas many of those that are available are part-time and/ or temporary (Green, Atfield et al., 2013). This suggests that a mismatch in job seekers' and employers' requirements is a barrier to labour market status mobility. Other issues of relevance here are availability of flexible working practices – which are of particular relevance for those individuals with care responsibilities (McQuaid et al., 2013).

In terms of location, although evidence suggests that employment structures of urban and rural areas have become more similar over time, there remain some important differences between establishments in rural and urban areas which may impinge on labour market status mobility and geographic mobility. The establishment structure is more skewed towards small businesses and (at UK level) public administration is less well represented in rural areas than in urban areas, and both of these factors are associated with reduced emphasis placed on formal training plans which may facilitate labour market status mobility. Evidence from employer surveys also underlines the fact that issues relating to poor public transport and remoteness underlie a greater share of hard-to-fill vacancies in rural than in urban areas (Owen et al., 2013). This does not mean that establishments in rural areas do not train, but rather that there is more reliance on informal approaches and less emphasis placed on academic and vocational qualifications in recruitment decisions; these may act as a barrier to labour mobility in some circumstances, but not in others.

2.5 Local contextual factors

Quantity and quality of local jobs: A lack of local jobs and poor quality jobs might be expected to impinge on labour market status mobility and geographic mobility. Using data on inter-regional job search behaviour and mobility decisions in Sweden, Eliasson et al. (2003) suggest that commuting is more likely to be the preferred mode of geographic mobility in metropolitan regions vis-à-vis other regions. In relation to quality of jobs, low pay is an issue; McQuaid et al. (2013) suggest that in the light of this financial incentives may be a facilitating factor for those individuals already contemplating employment.

Local work culture and local labour market operation and norms: Research suggests that individuals' and households' behaviour is influenced by neighbourhood norms and attitudes towards (the importance of) paid work and other aspects of socio-economic life. Here it is relevant to note that some individuals and households have strong place attachment, and this influences how they see the world in terms of subjective 'opportunity structures' (i.e. the opportunities that they perceive exist for people like them) (Green and White, 2007). Individuals with a strong attachment to place tend to look inwards to the immediate locality, rather than outwards to a wider set of opportunities. This influences both their geographic mobility and can also affect prospects for labour market mobility.

Local infrastructure: Where people live matters in terms of their access to the physical transport infrastructure, and education, training and employment opportunities and the horizons that they have. In general, those individuals in accessible locations with a good transport infrastructure are better placed to travel to a range of opportunities in different locations than those in more peripheral locations with a poorer transport infrastructure (Green and White, 2007). Hence local infrastructure matters for connections between people and jobs.

2.6 Macro level factors

Prevailing economic conditions play an important role in unemployment and economic inactivity. Those individuals who are most disadvantaged in the labour market are at the end of the queue for jobs and are particularly unlikely to find employment in an economic downturn. This fact underlines the limits to policy to facilitate labour market status and geographic mobility at times of economic crisis.

In terms of welfare and institutional factors and labour market/ employment policy, the workings of the benefits system and conditionality rules impact on job search decisions. Factors supporting labour market participation are important also. Research on those with caring responsibilities highlights specifically the importance of provision and cost of care support (particularly with regard to childcare) (McQuaid et al., 2013). Likewise, there are other well-known institutional obstacles to accessing employment. These include the benefit trap where the risks associated with low-wage risky employment mean that there are sometimes problems in accepting work in some employment sectors.

3. THE NORTHERN IRELAND EXPERIENCE OF LABOUR MOBILITY

3.1 Introduction

This section outlines the Northern Ireland experience of labour mobility. After setting out particular features of the Northern Ireland context, it explores features of geographic mobility (section 5.2) and then access to work and labour market status mobility (section 5.3), with reference to key features of the framework set out in Figure 3. Key issues for future work and of particular reference for policy are highlighted in italics.

Historically, the Northern Irish economy has been weak and slow growing with particularly high rates of unemployment (Gudgin and O'Shea, 1993; Smith and Chambers, 1991). Increasingly, in the 1970s, there was also fundamental questioning of the nature and existence of Northern Ireland and especially equality in the housing and labour markets between Catholics and Protestants. These problems of communal inequality were understood by many to be inherent to the sectarian nature of Northern Ireland and its establishment in the early 1920s on the basis of a headcount of Catholics and Protestants (Barritt and Carter, 1962). Northern Ireland has therefore been perceived as a 'problem region' for a variety of reasons especially during The Troubles when the poor performance of the economy was seen by some as contributing to violence (McGarry and O'Leary, 1995; Sheehan and Tomlinson, 1999). This understanding placed social and labour market policies at the centre of government involvement in Northern Ireland since successful measures to manage the economy and to ensure greater wealth and its wider distribution, was seen by British and international politicians as a means to manage or perhaps end political violence. The 1970s, 1980s and 1990s therefore saw government intervention in the economy to encourage jobs growth and to ensure that there was equal access to the labour market for Catholics and Protestants (Osborne and Shuttleworth, 2004).

These measures have not been without success. In the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s, the unemployment rate of Catholic men was over twice as high as that for Protestant men. This was one of the indicators chosen to measure labour market disadvantage, and was publicised as such by Mo Mowlam (then Secretary of State for Northern Ireland) in 1998 but it has since become less important because of large falls in registered unemployment for Catholics and Protestants. The numbers and proportions of polarised workplaces (greater than 90% Catholic or Protestant) have also fallen through time as revealed by the annual returns of the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland (ECNI). Furthermore, it would also be untrue to say that the economy of Northern Ireland remains the same problem as it was in the past. The late 1990s and the early 2000s saw sustained jobs and incomes growth (Rogers 2006) that made Northern Ireland one of the fastest expanding UK regions. Despite this, however, high economic inactivity rates persist especially in rural regions and some urban areas, the economy remains dominated by the public sector, and the financial recession that struck in 2007/2008 has recently curbed economic growth.

Northern Ireland, like any other region, is a mix of the 'ordinary' and the 'unique'. It has largely followed the same economic and labour market trajectory as other UK regions and, indeed, the Republic of Ireland. This trajectory has been shaped by national economic policies but also by wider developments in the global economy. Just as in other parts of the UK, Northern Ireland has experienced a loss of manufacturing jobs and de-industrialisation (Shuttleworth et al., 2005), a shift towards service employment alongside attempts at economic regeneration and reinvention (McKinstry and Shuttleworth, 2002), and increases in long-term unemployment rates and benefit dependency. This is the 'ordinary' – and Belfast, for example, could be described in these terms alongside Bradford and Birmingham with only minor variations. However, place-specific factors are more likely to be important in Northern Ireland than in other UK regions because of the context of political violence since 1969. This makes Northern Ireland, if such a term is permissible, more 'unique' than other places of the UK. Violence, either actual and directly experienced, or indirect

and perceived, has influences attitudes and behaviour. The historical and geographical contexts shaping geographic labour mobility in Northern Ireland are therefore more complicated than elsewhere. The interplay of general and unique labour market factors in Northern Ireland will be explored in the immediately following sections but include:

- Relatively low labour demand and high-rates of long-term economic inactivity particularly in some rural areas
- Concentrations of joblessness in urban communities which have faced particular challenges from historic violence and civil conflict
- The continued existence of large-scale residential communal segregation which structures labour supply and which may (despite the comparative peace of the last twenty years) limit spatial mobility in the labour market via the 'chill factor'
- The experience of legal intervention in the labour market via employment equality legislation which exceeds the general UK experience
- A relatively youthful population relative to many other parts of Europe with all the advantages this offers but all the challenges associated with the scarring effects of recession during the transition from education to work

3.2 Geographic labour mobility in Northern Ireland

Outline: Labour mobility in Northern Ireland can be understood to have two components, as outlined in Figure 2: (a) long-term intra-regional moves that necessitate address changes and then (b) daily moves (commuting between home and work). Both types of mobility help to match labour supply and labour demand through geographical space. It is therefore useful to reflect on the geography of employment in Northern Ireland and also on the location of labour supply.

Analysis of the Northern Ireland Census of Employment at the ward level shows that Greater Belfast remains the dominant location of employment in Northern Ireland at the regional spatial scale, and the centre of Belfast remains a major employment location despite the growth of industrial estates on the urban periphery and at motorway junctions (Lloyd and Shuttleworth, 2005). In contrast, the rural West and South of Northern Ireland have fewer job opportunities and employment here is sparser. This East/West divide has been remarkably durable despite the attempts of regional policy to decentralise jobs growth. *Despite this, it is worthwhile updating this work with later data from the Census of Employment to get the most accurate and recent of the geography of labour demand.*

If surplus labour supply is defined by those who are either claiming unemployment benefits or else economically inactive, then there is also a clear geography of surplus labour supply. As might be expected there are high rates of benefit uptake in some parts of Belfast (Shuttleworth and Green, 2011) and these seem to exist in close juxtaposition with concentrations of jobs. It seems in this case, therefore, that there is little evidence for so-called spatial mismatch (Kain, 1968) between those needing work and the location of jobs. However, at a regional spatial scale, this may be untrue. Rural areas of the West see high unemployment and economic inactivity rates and in these places job opportunities are fewer and more dispersed than in urban areas and especially the East of Northern Ireland. *This indicates a need to be sensitive to urban and rural differences and the differing barriers to work in rural areas in comparison with urban locations. In urban areas, physical distances are probably not a barrier so it is likely that perceptions or non-spatial obstacles are more important than in the country where physical distance is possibly a bigger problem.*

Intra-regional geographical labour mobility in Northern Ireland - general factors: As noted in section 1, it is usually considered that longer-distance moves requiring an address change occur for labour-market related reasons whereas shorter-distance moves are often for environmental, housing market, or other reasons. There have been no recent studies of labour migration in Northern Ireland and of the importance of address changes in adjusting supply and demand in the

labour market. However, there is some indirect evidence provided by Shuttleworth et al (2013) on housing mobility in general and this can be used to infer something about the labour market. They find that the median distance of housing move (as defined by an address change) in Northern Ireland between 2001 and 2007 is only 3.58km. There are very few people who move house over distances greater than 20km. This suggests that most people remain *in situ*, that geographic mobility at a regional scale does not seem to be a very effective labour market adjustment mechanism in Northern Ireland, and that most people change address for motives other than the labour market. Northern Ireland is also observed by Shuttleworth et al. (2013) to be a relatively low housing mobility region in comparison with other parts of the UK. *This suggests that there is some scope to investigate whether longer-distance moves (which might necessitate, for example, moving house from Strabane to Belfast) are feasible, whether other types of mobility (e.g. weekly commuting) substitute for moving house, and whether there are factors that tie people to certain places are stronger in Northern Ireland than elsewhere.*

Daily labour mobility in Northern Ireland - general factors: There have been few quantitative studies of commuting in Northern Ireland apart from Lloyd and Shuttleworth (2005) and Shuttleworth and Lloyd (2005). These accounts use 2001 Census of Population data in combination with Census of Employment data (various years) to examine how labour supply and labour demand are matched by commuting. They emphasise the difference between rural and urban areas and show the importance of space as a contextual factor. Urban areas, which typically have a greater density of jobs, typically have shorter-distance commutes because there are more opportunities within a smaller radius from home. Commutes increase for residents of the East of Northern Ireland presumably because many travel from semi-rural and suburban locations to jobs in Belfast. Commutes are longest in the rural West and South where opportunities are more dispersed. The analyses are undertaken using ecological data and shows that the proportion of professional workers increases commutes as does increasing social deprivation (a function of higher deprivation in the West), and that negative influences on average commuting distances are the percentage of households with no cars and the increasing density of jobs. The analyses shows that the ecological determinants of average commuting are like those seen in England and Wales (Coomes and Raybould 2001) and that geographical context are important. *This indicates the need to take account of spatial context when researching geographic mobility in Northern Ireland.*

The individual-level factors that are associated with labour-market mobility are normal in the sense that they are much like those noted elsewhere. Shuttleworth and Gould (2010) examine the relationship between home and employment location for employees at 28 sites across Northern Ireland. Factors such as gender and occupation influence the distance between home and work, with men travelling further than women and those in higher-grade occupations also being more mobile. The analysis also confirms the importance of neighbourhood characteristics (such as population density observed in ecological analyses at ward level) in shaping individual outcomes, with major differences found between urban and rural locations. Beyond this, it also points to the relative significance of residential location, with less individual variability in travel-to-work distance between workers within wards than within employment sites. The same features appear in other studies. Shuttleworth et al. (2005) consider redundancy and note that those former Harland & Wolff workers with cars, and in higher-grade occupations, had longer commutes and were more likely to travel further to subsequent jobs. The importance of educational qualifications was also apparent. A different suite of variables, but ones that point in the same general direction, are apparent when benefit claimants are the focus. Shuttleworth and Green (2011) and Shuttleworth et al. (2008) note that benefit claimants were more likely to express a willingness to travel further if they had had above average commutes in earlier jobs, if they had shorter times on benefits, if they had cars, and if they lived in rural areas. They were also more likely to have a more positive attitude towards employment than those who appeared to have more localised horizons. Significant ill health was associated with a decreased willingness to travel as was having another

household member in receipt of benefits. Northern Ireland empirical investigations therefore indicate that the determinants of individual and household mobility are much like those observed in the wider literature. Furthermore, they indicate that *some of the contextual factors* that operate on mobility (e.g. rurality) are like those seen outside Northern Ireland. However, Northern Ireland differs in significant ways from other places in its wider context, and it is to this theme that the review turns in the next section.

Daily labour mobility in Northern Ireland - unique factors: The sectarian division of labour market and social space through communal territoriality between Catholics and Protestants sets Northern Ireland apart from the rest of the UK and sets the wider context for the geographical mobility of labour. The only places that are possibly similar, and there the divisions are much milder than in Northern Ireland, are Glasgow and Liverpool. This sectarianisation and territorialisation of space, seen at its starkest in urban interface areas, might currently influence the housing market and where people go to work, although its precise historical and contemporary importance is hard to assess and is contested. In the labour market, this territorialisation of space is termed the 'chill factor' (Smith and Chambers, 1991) which leads to a reluctance to travel through an area dominated by people from the opposite religious background, or similarly, to work in a workplace dominated by the 'other'. It was argued in the past that this contributed to the creation and maintenance of the male unemployment differential between Catholics and Protestants although it was difficult to tie down in numeric terms its exact contribution. Some elements creating the chill factor (e.g. in the workplace) could be addressed through those parts of successive rounds of fair employment legislation (Osborne and Shuttleworth, 2004) which laid the onus upon employers of promoting a neutral workplace free of national and sectarian emblems. Arguably, given the decline in polarised employers noted earlier, it is possible that the chill factor has decreased in importance at least for some parts of the population. Less could be done, however, about events, emblems, and signs outside the workplace and on the way to and from work (Anderson and Shuttleworth, 2002) and in this regard the 'chill factor' might be alive and kicking at least for some parts of the population. This is especially so as although there is some evidence that residential segregation fell between 2001 and 2011 (Shuttleworth, 2013), existing levels of segregation are difficult to overcome. This means, since most people live local lives, that it is possible to remain residentially in the same area and to work close by.

The wider research undertaken by Anderson and Shuttleworth (2002) noted that real or perceived fear of violence was a particular problem for inner-city Belfast residents in their uptake of work. 'Avoiding strategies' could be adopted to manage risk. These included varying routes to and from work and, similarly, times. For an unknown proportion of people, fear could act as an obstacle to gaining work. However, for 'outsiders', usually car-borne commuters who were unaware of local territoriality, fear was no obstacle at all. The persistence of local territorial geographies was also noted by Green et al (2005) in their work with young people. There was a clear delimitation between places that were known and unknown and furthermore between places that were safe or unsafe. But some of this knowledge was not based on current information but instead shaped by events from years ago, and some perceptions and beliefs held by young people [were plainly wrong]. The information itself is complex since fear and violence vary at different times of day and year and for different demographic groups. Anderson and Shuttleworth (2002) note that fear tends to be more prevalent at politically-charged times in the summer, that it is greater for men than for women, and more powerful for younger inner-city residents than some for some older people. There is perhaps scope to develop these themes in qualitative work.

Into this latter category, fell the claim of a Shankill young person that there were jobs as carpenters at the Harland & Wolff shipyard (despite the yard closing some years earlier). This encapsulates some of the problems in identifying and measuring the chill factor. Similarly, the chill factor might not be based on a real and objective risk of danger but on misinformation or old information. *If this*

is so, it indicates the practical work needed to overcome it for the most marginalised sections of the population. There are, however, methodological and conceptual issues that must be faced when researching the chill factor. Methodological and conceptual problems combine when it becomes necessary to decide what is 'chill' and what can be classed as 'normal' spatiality. Most people have imperfect and inaccurate knowledge of their spatial surroundings and there can be 'good' reasons for going to one shop or place rather than another which can range from 'not liking the look of it' to 'not passing through it on the way to and from work'. In Northern Ireland, it would be easy, but perhaps wrong to term this as 'chill'. On the other hand, however, it is possible that sometimes people choose to go to one place instead of another because of sectarian factors but are not prepared to voice them to an interviewer because they think they are unacceptable or instead because they are perhaps not fully consciously aware of them. Part of this problem is explored by Green et al. (2005) who claim there are East Belfast and West Belfast views of the city. This neatly makes a divide on Catholic/Protestant sectarian lines but with one important caveat. This is that the spatial perceptions of East Belfast Catholics are more like East Belfast Protestants than West Belfast Catholics. *This indicates once again that location is important and that this can be confounded with religion in a territorially-divided society when analysing chill and perceptions.* Fear also seemed to be related to a general lack of spatial confidence and knowledge of the city that was coupled with a localised worldview in other aspects. This made it difficult to tease out how chill differs from a general unwillingness to venture far.

The chill factor can also be viewed in more abstract ways but these impact on the ways in which fear in the Northern Ireland market can be understood. In terms of standard classical labour market theory, it might be understood as an imperfection produced by social forces and violence that prevents the optimum match of supply and demand. It can also be conceptualised, however, in terms of labour market segmentation where the social practices of workers, unions and employers (Howe 1990) have created local labour geographies. This latter approach links together 'normal' forces – after all, for example, 'addressism' is a phenomenon that exists outside Northern Ireland – to produce inequalities by race, age and gender in the composition of workforces. Because it does so, it makes it harder to disentangle the results of fear from the other socially-constructed aspects of labour markets elsewhere. *Identifying the chill factor, let alone trying to estimate its impact, is likely to be challenging for researchers in Northern Ireland and this adds to the methodological problems noted earlier.*

3.3 Access to work and labour market status mobility in Northern Ireland

There is empirical evidence on access to work in Northern Ireland and it is possible to answer the questions of who benefits and where with some degree of confidence. The large-scale recruitment study reported by Shuttleworth and Gould (2010) and Shuttleworth and McKinstry (2001) examined the labour market history and background of applicants and appointees to a variety of new or expanding employment sites across Northern Ireland. The analysis showed that, even though they were located in or near areas defined as being in social need, many applicants came from outside these areas. *This showed that the spatial targeting of jobs to areas of deprivation with the intention of benefiting residents of those areas is a blunt instrument.* The study also considered, where possible, the individual characteristics of workers. The chief dimensions that were used, because they were present in company records, were previous labour market history, education, and age. The analyses showed that only around 30% of newly-created jobs went to those who were not previously in work. *This meant that most new jobs went to those were already in employment and that the impact of job creation on the jobless is indirect and rather diffuse.* Applicants and appointees tended to be younger (in their thirties) than the rest of the workforce and education was also seen as conferring benefits in terms of employment. These individual-level factors are not unexpected. Extra insights that build on these findings were gained from the study of the 2000/2001 Harland & Wolff redundancy. This showed that the ex-employees most likely to be

reabsorbed into employment had higher qualifications than less successful workers, and were also more likely to be younger, to have had access to private transport, to have been owner occupiers, and to have had transferable skills. The themes of health and spatial mobility are picked up by the work on Incapacity Benefit Claimants reported by Shuttleworth et al. (2008) and Shuttleworth and Green (2011). This showed that those who had the poorest health, who were older, who had poorer (or no) qualifications, had other household members claiming benefits, and had been less mobile in their previous jobs (or had smaller mobility horizons) than others, were less likely to be optimistic about their job prospects and less positively oriented towards work. Duration of claim was also a major factor (as highlighted in section 2) – longer periods in receipt of benefit were associated with pessimism about the prospects for re-employment but longer-duration claimants often tended to be older, less qualified, and sicker than short duration claimants. *This indicates the existence of a labour market queue and the complex inter-relationship of personal factors that set one's place in it. There are severe problems in placing older and sicker claimants in work.* Local geographical context is also important and forms part of the wider employability mix as envisaged in the 2002 DEL Taskforce on Employability. Here the results from the Incapacity Benefit research are paradoxical since they tend to show that some claimants perceive a shortage of jobs in areas where, objectively, there are many jobs. *This indicates a need to investigate the nature, structure, and perceptions of local labour markets in more detail.*

Local qualitative studies of particular recruitment experiences point out the importance of other individual characteristics and barriers to employment as well as the significance of employer practices. Detailed case studies undertaken as part of the large-scale recruitment study reveal some of the contingencies of gaining employment in Northern Ireland, and some of the measures at the point of recruitment to help the jobless to gain work. These studies (McKinstry and Shuttleworth, 2002; McKinstry, 2004a, 2004b) suggest that labour demand is about far more than the number of jobs. It includes various aspects of the quality of jobs such as the qualification/ skill level for entry, the hours (and the regularity of these hours) required, the security of work, and the way that the jobs are gendered (e.g. some jobs are seen as female – like many in call centres – and not immediately considered by some jobless people). If, as has been the case in Belfast, specific attempts are made by employers to reach out to jobless people, then attempts have to be made to minimise these barriers. These might include showing prospective workers the nature of the jobs, familiarising jobless people with new employment sites (about which there may be perceptual barriers), and dropping educational qualifications as a sifting mechanism with their replacement by aptitude tests based on competencies. Despite these and similar efforts, however, it was also noted that recruitment problems continued especially in the form of retention. One issue in particular was the problem of start and end times (particularly in the hospitality sector) that hindered access for those who did not have private transport (McKinstry 2003). Another problem relating to labour demand was the insecurity of many entry-level jobs. The hours of jobs could vary and sometimes it was by no means certain they would last. Even if it was economically rational at that particular moment to start work as there was a higher wage than on benefits, it was therefore unclear how long this would last. Some people therefore took a longer-term perspective and decided that given the totality of their benefit package (and the slowness of signing on and off) that they were better sticking with a certain, but lower income, and not taking a job. The economic and policy environment has changed since this work was undertaken. There has been a recession, wage cuts and greater insecurity. At the same time, benefit claimants have been targeted with the aim of forcing them into work, but it is possible that this may also make some people want to sit tight to maintain their current level of benefit security given the changed nature of work. *There is thus room for some further case studies of recruitment to bring this work up to date.* These problems move into more subtle aspects of individual characteristics as they influence employability and it is to these now that the account turns.

The case studies reveal that individual characteristics other than age, qualifications, and previous economic status are important in placing people in the 'employability queue'. The nature of the jobs that are available interacts subtly with less tangible personal characteristics. In call centres, for instance, there is a premium on voice and vocal presentation to a wide variety of people. Accent, diction, and syntax therefore are vitally important and, rightly or wrongly, certain voices are seen by employers as being less attractive and less suitable than others. Some Northern Ireland voices are marketable but others, often working class and inner city, can in some circumstances be considered to be too difficult and 'thick'. This would not be an obstacle to work in a manual manufacturing environment but it could be turned into a barrier by the types of job that are available and their particular requirement. Another barrier to employment that emerged in this series of case studies was childcare. This remained a problem despite investment in childcare support. This was largely because the irregular nature of the hours of work that were required in some sectors made it difficult to get suitable cover. This made some jobs hard to get and even harder to keep once gained. *The case studies show that targeted interventions in the labour market by employers (e.g. open days, community presentations) can help jobless people surmount barriers that keep them from employment even in sites very near to their homes. However, new jobs can give formerly unimportant individual characteristics greater importance and lead these to act as barriers when before they were unimportant. Job insecurity, associated with the flexible and temporary nature of some jobs, can make it rational to avoid moving from non-employment to employment where returns are perceived as uncertain.*

4. IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICY AND THE FOCUS OF SUBSEQUENT RESEARCH

4.1 Policy implications

Gordon (2003) suggests that from a policy perspective the key strategic issue is whether unevenness in spatial labour markets should be tackled through:

- targeted job creation (which in the past has been a particular feature of Northern Ireland [Shuttleworth and Green, 2009]);
- actions to improve labour market flexibility - such as training, assistance with mobility and equal opportunities; or
- macroeconomic demand management – i.e. the idea that economic growth will eventually mean that spatial unevenness is ironed out.

He argues that there is sufficient evidence of strong adjustment processes (and associated leakage effects) within urban labour markets to indicate that "targeted job creation policies are liable to be an ineffective way of tackling ... concentrations of unemployment" (Gordon, 2003: 56). For Gordon, the key issue is not the level of mobility, but rather the uneven way in which mobility and job competition processes operate (see also Shuttleworth et al. (2000) in Belfast). He suggests that intra-urban concentrations of unemployment are largely a function of person-related factors relating to the risk of suffering unemployment⁵⁸ and differences in population risk, rather than a direct result of localised failures of demand. He suggests that policy needs to focus on combinations of supply-side measures targeted at all the links in local processes of labour market and housing market operation which act together to lead to spatial concentrations in unemployment, together with policies to promote upward occupational mobility of people already in

⁵⁸ He argues that competitive disadvantage is likely to be a consequence of previous experience of unemployment, by the individual, their family, or the areas in which they have lived, compounded by prejudices of various kinds.

employment, in order to relieve congestion in entry-level occupations into which unemployed residents might realistically move.

In policy terms the ability of people to geographically access employment may be achieved by: (1) taking jobs to workers; (2) taking (potential) workers to jobs; and (3) enhancing transport networks and access to transport so that workers can reach jobs. Issues (1) and (2) are at the centre of discussion in Shuttleworth and Green (2009). They point out that there are limits to the extent to which a 'taking jobs to workers' approach is economically feasible, especially in an increasingly integrated global economy. There are some areas where there is a 'shortfall' in suitable jobs for those with poor skills. However, many of the non-employed are concentrated in 'job-rich' city environments, but are seemingly unable to compete effectively with in-commuters for available jobs. This suggests that greater emphasis needs to be placed on effective strategies for linking local residents to available jobs. As Gordon (2003) implies, such strategies might focus on enhancing skills and on reshaping attitudes: for example, helping many of the non-employed who formerly worked in 'traditional' industries to gain the 'soft skills' associated with personal service occupations and customer care.

Not all neighbourhoods or all people are the same; where they are located, their history, their socio-demographic and economic characteristics matter. Place-specific factors, such as geographical location, community norms and historical and current patterns of local employment, are crucial in understanding how and whether policy interventions work, alongside who is involved in their delivery. This suggests a need for local flexibility in design and implementation of policy (Green and White, 2007).

Moreover, it may be the case that multiple cross-cutting factors impinge negatively on the labour market status mobility of those most disadvantaged in the labour market. This suggests a need for policy interventions that are holistic working across different domains (e.g. education, health, care provision and employability) and for personalisation of policy. So, to promote moves into employment for persons with disabilities McQuaid et al. (2013) suggest that there is a need for a multi-pronged integrated approach including a focus on employers (to make them more aware of legislation and of support available for persons with disabilities), improving employers' awareness of programmes to support persons with disabilities into employment, improving the qualifications and skills of persons with disabilities.

4.2 Implications for the focus of subsequent research

The research evidence suggests that there is a need to consider individual characteristics, perceptions and motivations alongside wider structural barriers to labour market status and geographical mobility. These individual characteristics need to be set within household, local labour market contexts and urban/ rural contexts. Features of the quality, nature, quantity and geography of jobs are important also. The quality and nature of jobs is particularly important for labour market status moves.⁵⁹ This suggests that besides the need for a careful choice of topics there needs to be an equally careful choice of study areas for primary research.

Suggested specific topics for further exploration in the current study are outlined in Table 2. Table 3 outlines topics that could be the subject of further research on the themes discussed in this review, but are outside the scope of this particular study.

⁵⁹ Here it is relevant to note that this review has uncovered little evidence on moves into and out of self-employment.

Table 2: Topics to explore in subsequent research in the current study

| |
|---|
| Non-employed |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Skills and attributes - what do job seekers (stratified by age, gender, and duration of claim) think employers are looking for and do they have such skills? |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Main sources of labour market information - who/ where would individuals go for information on jobs? Which information sources are rated most highly? What is the role of social networks? |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Household issues - (how) to wider household circumstances shape decisions about searching for work |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Geographical issues - where would individuals look for work (and how far away)? How would they travel? Are there any 'no go' areas (and, if so), where? What are the other constraints on mobility? |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Perceptions of main barriers to employment (and any inter-relationships between them) |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preferred hours of work and reservation wage |
| Job Centre Advisers and others (e.g. local politicians, community workers etc.) |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Perceptions of <i>key barriers to employment</i> - and how these vary by sub-group |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are the key influences on individuals' decisions re employment – probing household factors |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whether there are key gaps in information and specialist expertise in advising the non-employed about work, and if so, what are those gaps? |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Geographic mobility - are there areas where there are jobs but where people are reluctant to travel? If so where? For whom? (How can fears be overcome?) |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (What) are the(re) different challenges in urban and rural areas? |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What current measures to help the non-employed into employment are (not) working well? |
| Employers |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Skills and attributes required from job seekers - especially for job roles not requiring high level skills (tease out relative importance of formal qualifications and previous experience vis-à-vis attitude, enthusiasm, reliability, etc.) |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recruitment and selection methods - where are jobs advertised (e.g. use of formal/ informal channels - Web, agencies, etc.)? |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Experience of any specific initiatives put in place to recruit the non-employed (and success or otherwise) - including from specific areas (to gain insights into NI experience of 'chill') |

Table 3: Selected topics for future detailed research

| |
|---|
| Update work on the geographical location of employment (at the micro area level) using secondary data |
| Investigation of the feasibility of longer distance moves in Northern Ireland vis-à-vis longer distance commuting |
| Investigation of whether locational ties in Northern Ireland are stronger than those elsewhere |
| Updated research on the 'chill factor' in the context of the ending of much political violence in rural and urban locations |
| Detailed study of the nature, structure and perceptions of selected urban and rural local labour markets |
| Studies of employers' changing recruitment and selection practices |

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Annex B: Topic guide used in focus groups with the non-employed

Introduction

- Introduce self
- Introduce research – views of those looking for employment how they approach job finding, including sources of information, how their household circumstances influence their decisions, location of jobs and any other barriers that shape their job seeking activities.
- Explain how focus groups work – no right or wrong answers etc.
- Explain use of tape/video
- Explain confidentiality, anonymity and reporting procedures
- Ask each participant to introduce themselves – name, family background, length of time without employment, previous employment nature and duration

Skills and attributes

- What skills do employers look for when recruiting?
- Probe technical ability, experience, qualifications, interpersonal skills,
- To what extent do you match the skill expectations that employers have?
- What, if anything, have you done to try to meet employers' expectations?

Main sources of labour market information

- Where do you obtain information on jobs?
- Probe word of mouth, job centre, newspapers (which ones), internet (which websites), recruitment agencies, social media
- Which are the best sources of information when looking for information on jobs? Why?
- What are the barriers, if any, to searching for jobs in the most effective ways?
- Other than looking for information on specific job opportunities, what other information do you seek when searching for a job?
- Probe CV writing, company background, type of job skills required, likely pay levels etc.
- Is there any information is difficult to find but which would help your job seeking activities?
- Is there any specialist expertise that you would like but which is difficult to find?
- What additional support would be helpful whilst seeking employment?
- Would additional support during employment also be helpful? If so, what type?

Key influences when looking for employment

- How do your wider household circumstances shape decisions about searching for work?
- Probe access to childcare, childcare costs, part-time/full-time/term-time/flexible hours, other carer responsibilities, other
- How do you view being employed – what are the positives/negatives?

Geographical issues

- USE MAP AS APPROPRIATE TO PROMPT DISCUSSION
- In which geographical areas do you look for work?
- How close are these areas to your home (in miles)?
- What is a reasonable distance to travel for work?
- What is the maximum distance you are prepared to travel for work?
- Are there any 'no go' areas?
- Where are these 'no go' areas?
- Why are they 'no go' areas?

- Who are they 'no go' areas for?
- What, if anything, could be done to reduce the number of 'no go' areas or overcome fears?
- What other influences impact on the geographic areas that you consider for employment?
- Probe car ownership, availability of public transport, cost of travel, any others?
- Would you be prepared to move to another part of Northern Ireland to obtain employment?

- At what distance from you home does a move become more viable than commuting?
- What deters you from moving to another part of Northern Ireland? Probe costs, family, not knowing the area
- What are your perceptions of working away from your local area?

Perceptions of main barriers to employment

- For you personally, what are the main barriers to obtaining employment?
- Ask respondents to note them on 'Post It' notes and display on flipchart
- Probe, to what extent, if at all, are the following barriers:
- Lack of job opportunities
- Lack of qualifications
- Lack of job experience
- Length of time unemployed
- Lack of employability skills e.g. CV writing, interview skills
- Level of pay in comparison to benefits received
- Access to transport
- Access to childcare
- Age
- (Other barriers identified on post its)
- Ask participants to prioritise the barriers above starting with the biggest barrier.

Preferred hours of work

- What are your preferred hours of work?
- Why?

Security of income

- What wage level do you require to make it feasible to come off benefits?
- What influences this calculation? E.g. housing benefit, child care costs, travel costs etc.
- To what extent do you worry about the insecurity of income from a job?
- Does this deter you from coming off benefits? In what way?

Conclusions

- In summary, what are the key barriers for you in obtaining employment?
- What are the key influences on the geographical areas that you search for employment?

Annex C: Topic guides used in employer interviews and other stakeholder consultations

Employer interviews

| | |
|---------------------------------|---|
| 1) Recruitment practices | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recruitment and selection practices Where and how are jobs advertised? (formally and informally) Initiatives to recruit the non-employed, including from specific areas? If so, how successfully? |
| 2) Geography | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Views and evidence on the 'chill' factor How mobile is the NI labour force? Differences in the challenges faced between urban and rural areas |
| 3) Terms | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What hours are employees needed? |
| 4) Policy | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Are any government policies particularly helpful or creating barriers to recruiting the workers the company needs? Does the benefits system create a barrier to recruitment? |
| 5) Employer needs | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Most important skills and attributes? (especially for less skilled jobs) Relative importance of formal qualifications and previous experience, as opposed to attitude, enthusiasm, reliability, etc. |

Other stakeholder consultations

| | |
|-------------------------------------|--|
| 1) Geography | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Geographic mobility Views and evidence on the 'chill' factor Differences in the challenges faced between urban and rural areas |
| 2) Labour market information | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sources of information on jobs Access to this information How the current situation could be improved |
| 3) Influencing factors | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Impact of wider household factors on mobility To what extent are those with negative perceptions likely to be out of work for longer? |
| 4) Barriers | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Main barriers to employment What are the main gaps in the skills and attributes of jobseekers? What initiatives have employers attempted to overcome barriers. Were they successful? |
| 5) Policies | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Which policies and initiatives are working well and less well? Is there a case for providing more support to the non-employed who are seeking a move into self employment? If so, what kind of support? To what extent does the benefits system present a barrier to employment? |

Annex D: Econometric modelling results

A model of labour market status mobility across UK districts

Modelling approach

Using a combination of supply-side and demand-side factors, Oxford Economics created a multiple linear regression econometric model to predict the level of labour market status mobility within UK Local Authority Districts (LADs). Based on a combination of UK Census data and macroeconomic data from Oxford Economics' UK local forecasts, the model explains approximately 88% of the variability in the share of non-employed persons in the working-age (16-64) population across UK LADs.

For the purposes of this analysis, the non-employed are defined as including the following economic activity categories:

- Unemployed
- Looking after family/home
- Long-term sick or disabled
- Economically inactive for other reasons

Retirees and those in full-time education have been excluded from the analysis as they are less likely to start actively seeking work.

The analysis shows that, all else equal:

- there is a negative relationship between the average (mean) age of an LAD's population and its share of non-employed persons in the working-age population, which is to be expected given the high levels of youth unemployment in the UK at present;
- the skills of the working-age population is also a statistically significant factor in explaining the share of non-employed working-age persons. On average, areas with a higher share of people with no qualification have a higher share of non-employed people;
- the greater the proportion of females in the working-age population, the larger the share of non-employed persons in the 16-64 population. This is consistent with the findings of the literature review, and may reflect that females are less mobile in the labour market due to caring commitments; and
- the share of non-UK born persons in the working-age population is a statistically significant factor in explaining the share of non-employed persons. A higher share of foreign-born persons is associated with a higher share of non-employed persons (although note that in Northern Ireland the share of the non-UK born that is non-employed is actually lower than for the population as a whole).

In addition to the supply-side factors outlined above, the model also shows that demand-side factors are an important determinant of the share of non-employed persons in the working-age population. Areas with lower rates of GVA growth between 2008 and 2011 tended to have a higher share of non-employed persons within their working-age population. The model also controls for other regional differences that are not reflected in variables described above.

Modelling results

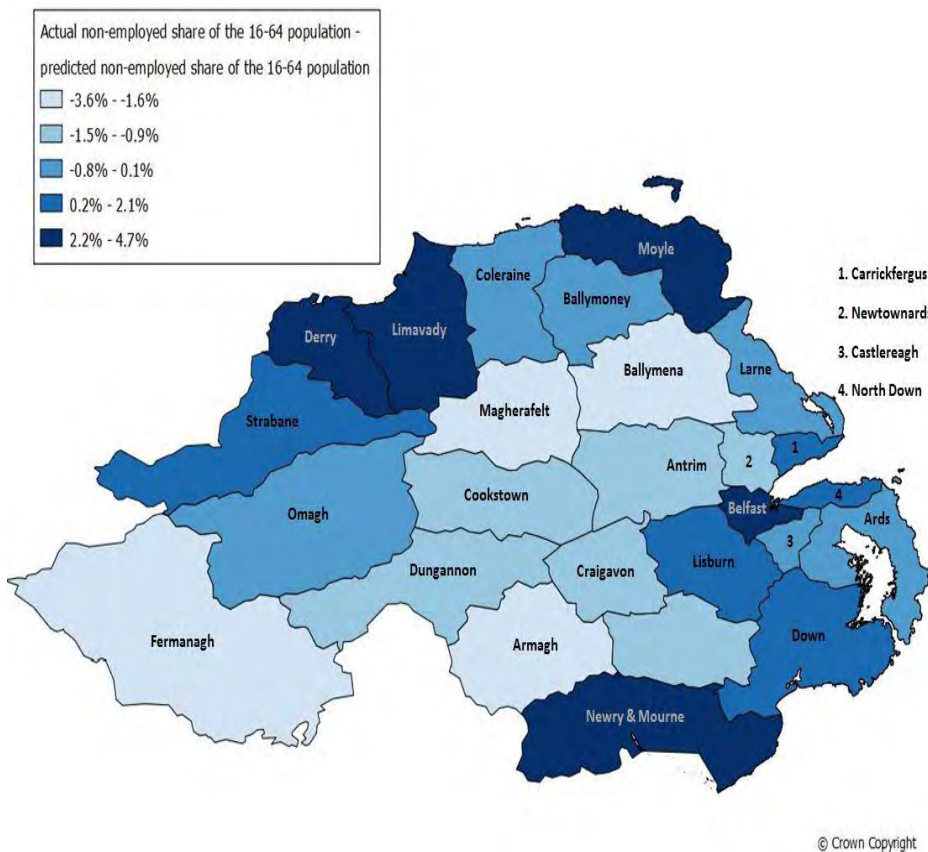
The results from the exercise are presented in the map below. This can be interpreted as follows:

- the darker areas on the map have a higher share of non-employed people within their population than our model predicted. This implies that a lack of labour market status mobility in these areas is not only due to the demographic and skills structure of the population; and
- the lighter areas have a lower share of non-employed people than predicted by the model. This implies the workforce in these areas has a higher degree of labour market status mobility than can be explained by the demographic and skills structure of the population.

This analysis suggests the greatest labour mobility challenges arise in two types of area. Firstly, Belfast and Derry~Londonderry are shown to have lower levels of mobility than the demographic and skills structure of their population would suggest. In these urban areas it is possible that intergenerational factors, and/or the chill factor are inhibiting mobility. Secondly, the rural areas of Moyle, and Newry and Mourne also have lower mobility than the model suggests. These areas are remote from employment centres and this may be acting as the main barrier to work.

Actual versus modelled results for the non-employed share of the working age population, 2011

Darker areas indicate a greater share of non-employed than expected given the demographic and skills structure of the population



Source: Oxford Economics

Econometric modelling results**Dependent Variable: Non-employed share of working-age (16-64) population**

Method: Least Squares

Sample: 1 373

Included observations: 373

White heteroskedasticity-consistent standard errors & covariance

| Variable | Coefficient | Std. Error | t-Statistic | Prob. |
|--|-------------|------------|-------------|--------|
| Mean age | -0.001840 | 0.000513 | -3.587889 | 0.0004 |
| Share of 16-64 population with no qualifications | 0.814387 | 0.024010 | 33.91936 | 0.0000 |
| Ratio of males to females in 16-64 population | -0.045307 | 0.020707 | -2.188007 | 0.0293 |
| Foreign born share of 16-64 population | 0.106502 | 0.018188 | 5.855508 | 0.0000 |
| Average GVA growth rate (2008-11) | -0.106462 | 0.043555 | -2.444322 | 0.0150 |
| South East dummy | 0.152849 | 0.033391 | 4.577517 | 0.0000 |
| London dummy | 0.157612 | 0.034305 | 4.594396 | 0.0000 |
| Eastern dummy | 0.142765 | 0.033344 | 4.281552 | 0.0000 |
| South West dummy | 0.151265 | 0.033889 | 4.463543 | 0.0000 |
| West Midlands dummy | 0.140925 | 0.034106 | 4.132006 | 0.0000 |
| East Midlands dummy | 0.136711 | 0.033801 | 4.044632 | 0.0001 |
| Yorkshire and Humber dummy | 0.143864 | 0.033960 | 4.236292 | 0.0000 |
| North West dummy | 0.156434 | 0.033290 | 4.699191 | 0.0000 |
| North East dummy | 0.172138 | 0.033468 | 5.143390 | 0.0000 |
| Wales dummy | 0.157712 | 0.033774 | 4.669579 | 0.0000 |
| Northern Ireland dummy | 0.137862 | 0.033262 | 4.144684 | 0.0000 |
| R-squared | 0.885485 | | | |
| Adjusted R-squared | 0.880673 | | | |

people:skills:jobs:



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