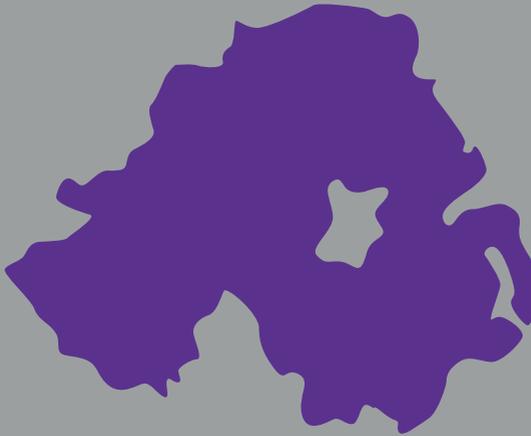


# A higher skills ambition for Northern Ireland.

*Skills for growth and  
social inclusion.*

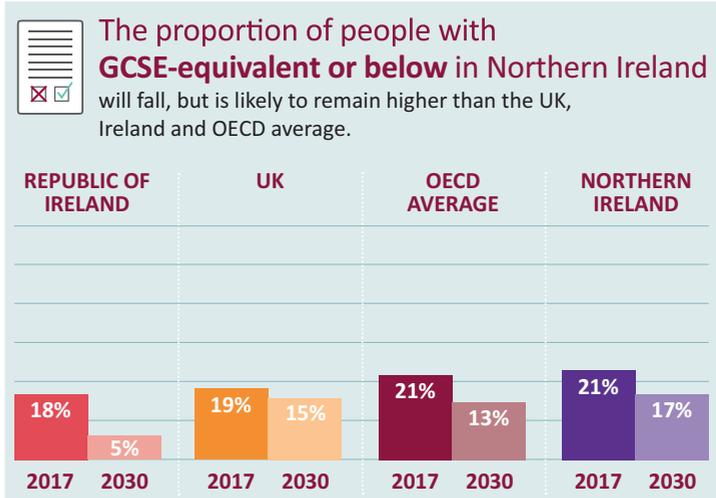


A report commissioned by Open College Network NI has found that by 2030 Northern Ireland will have the fourth highest proportion of low qualified people out of 16 OECD comparators.

# Northern Ireland Skills Falling Behind

Northern Ireland risks slipping further behind other countries in the skills of its people, a new report by a leading research institute finds.

The report, from the Learning and Work Institute, looks at how the NI skills profile compares to other countries by 2030. It finds that in 2030 Northern Ireland may have a substantially higher proportion of people without the equivalent of GCSE level qualifications than the OECD average (17.4% compared to 12.8%) and a lower proportion with at least a degree-level qualification (44.9% compared to 47.8%).



According to the new report by 2030 Northern Ireland may have the fourth highest proportion of low qualified people out of 16 OECD comparators. Northern Ireland's skills profile in 2030 will struggle to match the UK's position today, despite a further ten years to improve skills.

100%



the number of people claiming unemployment-related benefits has doubled since March 2020

58,000



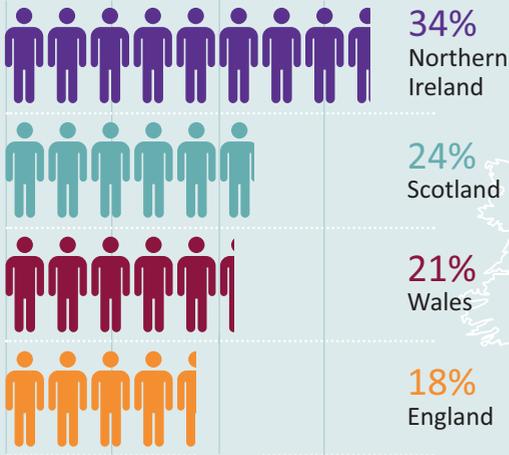
more people in work if Northern Ireland's employment rate matched Great Britain's

In comparison, the Republic of Ireland would be joint first for the proportion of people with high qualifications and have the joint lowest proportion with low qualifications.

# Investing in a Higher Ambition for Skills in NI

## 34% of adults in Northern Ireland

say they have not taken part in learning since leaving full-time education, higher than in England, Scotland and Wales.



Learning and Work Institute Chief Executive, Stephen Evans, states “The importance of learning and skills have been heightened by the coronavirus pandemic. Many more people will need help to find work or to retrain. Our report shows that Northern Ireland’s skills are likely to improve, but still lag behind other countries. If we want a prosperous, fair, and inclusive Northern Ireland, we need to invest in a higher ambition for learning and skills.”

## 50 YEAR CAREER

Young people leaving full-time education today are likely to have 50 year careers meaning they will need to **retrain and update their skills**.

Large differences in literacy and numeracy skills by family background affect career opportunities. A period out of work when young has a long-term scarring effect on pay and job prospects.



Paul Donaghy OCN NI, Research Project Manager, commented: “We recognise the life changing power of learning, its contribution to increased employment opportunities, improved productivity, increased income and a reduction in health and social inequality in society. Learning must become the golden thread running through public policy.”

# 3 Foundations for Success - What We Need To Do

Now is the time for concerted outcomes-based action aligned to funding. We need to build on proven best practice and grow this to scale.

1

## **Promote and fund a higher ambition around Skills for economic growth and social inclusion in Northern Ireland.**

The need to support the upskilling of ALL our people in Northern Ireland has never been greater, especially as we deal with the dramatic consequences of Coronavirus.

2

## **Promote alignment across all phases of education to meet learner, industry and community needs.**

Identify clear progression routes for learners of ALL ages, delivered in the most appropriate learning settings. Replace competition, duplication and repetition with coherent, outcome focussed pathways.

3

## **Promote Collaboration for Change**

To deliver on the Programme for Government and a more prosperous future for all in Northern Ireland, government and social partners in education, health, industry and the community need to work in a more collegiate, joined up and outcome focussed way.

After the launch of the report in January 2021, a full copy with infographics can be viewed on both the OCN NI and LWI websites.

**The OCN NI mission is to develop and award qualifications which engage, enrich and equip learners for life. Our vision is a successful, inclusive society where every learner matters.**