



## Industry Employment in Western Counties

This *WDC Insights* summarises key findings from 'Industry in the Western Region: Regional Sectoral Profile', the fourth in a series of reports analysing employment in economic sectors in the Western Region. Here the focus is on the seven western counties.<sup>1</sup> Data refers to the county where a person lives though they may commute to work elsewhere.

Industry is the Western Region's largest employment sector. It includes mining, utilities and waste management but by far the largest element is manufacturing.

### Employment in Industry in Western Counties

Among western counties, Industry is most important in Galway County, Clare and Galway City (Table 1) and it is their largest employment sector. All western counties (except Donegal) have a higher share working in Industry than the national average.

Donegal's industrial workforce halved during 1996-2016, with Sligo experiencing the next largest fall (-18%). In contrast, Galway County (+45.2%) and City (+27.9%) both had very strong growth. There has been a shift in the region's industrial activity from the North West to the West. All western counties had growth during 2011-2016 ranging from only 0.3% in Sligo to 21.1% in Leitrim.

Men account for the majority of the industrial workforce in all western counties, with Donegal having the highest male share and Galway City the lowest, influenced by their respective industrial profiles.

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

County	No. Employed	Industry as % of Total Employment	% Change 1996 - 2016	% Change 2011 - 2016	% of Industry that is Male
Clare	7,692	15.5%	-6.6%	10.4%	71.9%
Donegal	5,359	9.2%	-49.8%	7.9%	77.1%
Galway City	5,108	14.6%	27.9%	15.4%	63.8%
Galway County	12,239	16.3%	45.2%	20.7%	66.5%
Leitrim	1,465	11.5%	-6.8%	21.1%	71.9%
Mayo	7,312	14.2%	2.6%	14.0%	68.1%
Roscommon	3,317	12.8%	-0.1%	15.9%	73.8%
Sligo	3,262	12.5%	-18.0%	0.3%	67.1%
Western Region	45,754	13.7%	-3.3%	13.7%	69.4%
State	229,548	11.4%	-13.9%	9.4%	71.0%

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

### Profile of Industry Employment in Western Counties

**Clare:** Computer & Electronic (22% of all Industry employment) is the largest industrial employer in Clare which has the state's second highest share working in this activity. Clare also has a particular strength in Machinery & Electrical Equipment (15%) where it is fourth highest nationally. During 2011-2016 Wood & Non-Metallic Minerals (+51.6%) and MedTech (+45.3%) had the strongest growth. Shannon has the fourth highest share of its total employment in Industry (31.9%) among Ireland's 200 towns and cities.

1. 'WDC Insights: Industry Employment in the Western Region' explores issues for the region as a whole. All publications available at <https://www.wdc.ie/publications/reports-and-papers/>



**Donegal:** Donegal has the region's highest share in Agri-food (26%) with seafood processing a large element. While there have been massive losses in Clothing & Textiles, it still accounts for 9% of industrial employment, far higher than any other county in Ireland. At 7%, Donegal has the region's highest share working in Energy which also saw the strongest jobs growth (+38.7%) in the county (2011-2016), followed by Metals & Other (+35.7%).

**Galway City:** Industrial employment among Galway City residents is dominated by MedTech (56%) and it has the highest share in the state working in the sector. Other high-tech sectors – Computer & Electronic (8%) and Chemicals & Pharma (7%) – are next largest. During 2011-2016 there was strong growth in Energy (+70.9%), Computer & Electronic (+53.6%) and Transport Equipment (+47.5%).

**Galway County:** MedTech employs 40% of all industrial workers living in Galway County, with 10% working in Chemicals & Pharma. Wood & Non-Metallic Minerals (8%), which relies on domestic demand and construction, is next. During 2011-2016 there was 175.3% growth in Transport Equipment influenced by Valeo in Tuam. MedTech (+31%) and Computer & Electronic (+25.3%) had the next highest growth.

**Leitrim:** The largest industrial employers are MedTech (19%) and Chemicals & Pharma (15%), followed by the more traditional Wood & Non-Metallic (13%) where Leitrim has the region's highest share. Transport Equipment (8%) accounts for a higher share of industrial employment in Leitrim than any other county in Ireland. During 2011-2016, MedTech (+80.4%), Computer & Electronic (+51.6%) and Metals & Other (+42.1%) grew most.

**Mayo:** Industrial employment is dominated by Chemicals & Pharma, MedTech and Agri-food at around 20% each. During 2011-2016, there was 256.1% growth in Transport Equipment influenced by agricultural machinery and commuting to Valeo in Tuam. Machinery & Electrical (+32.5%) and MedTech (+27.9%) had next highest growth. Ballyhaunis has the highest share of its total employment in Industry (41.9%) among Ireland's 200 towns and cities.

**Roscommon:** Agri-food (20%), Chemicals & Pharma (20%) and MedTech (18%) are the largest industrial employers, with Roscommon having the region's second highest share in Agri-food. It has the third highest share working in Mining & Quarrying (7%) in Ireland. During 2011-2016, Transport Equipment (+61.1%) and MedTech (+58.6%) grew most, with Agri-food (+38.6%) recovering somewhat from previous losses.

**Sligo:** Chemicals & Pharma (32%) is the largest industrial employer and Sligo has the second highest share working in the sector in Ireland. Sligo also has the state's third highest share in MedTech (24%). During 2011-2016, only four industrial sub-sectors showed growth in Sligo with Metals & Other (+26.8%) and Transport Equipment (+25.8%) strongest.

## Key Policy Issues

**The Western Region is a global location for MedTech.** The cluster includes multinationals and Irish start-ups supported by a strong skills base and research infrastructure. Life Sciences, including MedTech and Chemicals & Pharma, is present in all counties but strongest in Galway, Sligo and Mayo. It is a key regional asset but its dominant role presents some risk. Opportunities for convergence with other sectors and dissemination of its expertise should be supported to promote industrial diversification.

**Activities which rely on domestic demand or the UK market face challenges.** These sectors play a larger role in rural counties, have high levels of Irish SME activity and are important for male employment. Manual tasks are vulnerable to automation and Brexit presents a threat, especially for Agri-food. Improving the competitiveness as well as market and product diversification of such firms will be important to sustaining the regional and rural economy.

**The region has an emerging strength in Transport Equipment.** For Galway County, Mayo and Roscommon it was the strongest growing sector and Leitrim has the highest share in the country. Many of the companies are located in medium-sized or small towns and opportunities to further embed and strengthen this emerging cluster should be supported.

For more detailed analysis see 'Industry in the Western Region: Regional Sectoral Profile' <http://www.wdc.ie/publications/reports-and-papers/>