

# Good Jobs: What are they and How do we get more?

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# What makes a job *good*?

- There is no single agreed definition of a “good job” - but there is strong consensus that job quality is a multi-faceted and objective concept, not something reducible to individual opinion or momentary satisfaction.
- While it's common to hear that job quality is "in the eye of the beholder" - or that some people are happy in jobs others would consider poor - this misses the point.
- Subjective satisfaction is not enough. People can report satisfaction in bad jobs - especially when the alternative is worse.
- This is not just theoretical. Research shows that subjective measures like job satisfaction are shaped by:
  - Adaptive preferences and expectations
  - Cognitive dissonance (rationalising poor conditions)
  - Mood, social norms, and biasThese indicators cannot reliably reveal whether a job is good or bad.

# Why Good Jobs Matter

*“It is not enough to ask people if they like their job. We must ask what the job actually is.” Geary & Wilson (2023)*

To truly understand job quality, we must assess the characteristics of jobs themselves - using objective, observable measures rooted in robust evidence.

Instead, job quality must be understood against a conceptual framework of a set of observable, measurable job attributes - the things we know from decades of research impact people’s:

- Health and wellbeing
- Workforce participation
- Productivity and economic outcomes

# A Framework for Good Jobs – Carnegie UK Trust & RSA

This framework recognises that a good job is not defined by a single feature, but by a combination of factors that enable people to thrive in work and over time.

It identifies seven core dimensions:

- Pay and benefits
- Security and stability
- Work–life balance
- Job design and the nature of work
- Social support and cohesion
- Voice and representation
- Opportunities for progression

This multi-dimensional approach reflects a growing international consensus that good jobs are good for workers, employers, and the economy.

# A Good Jobs Measure

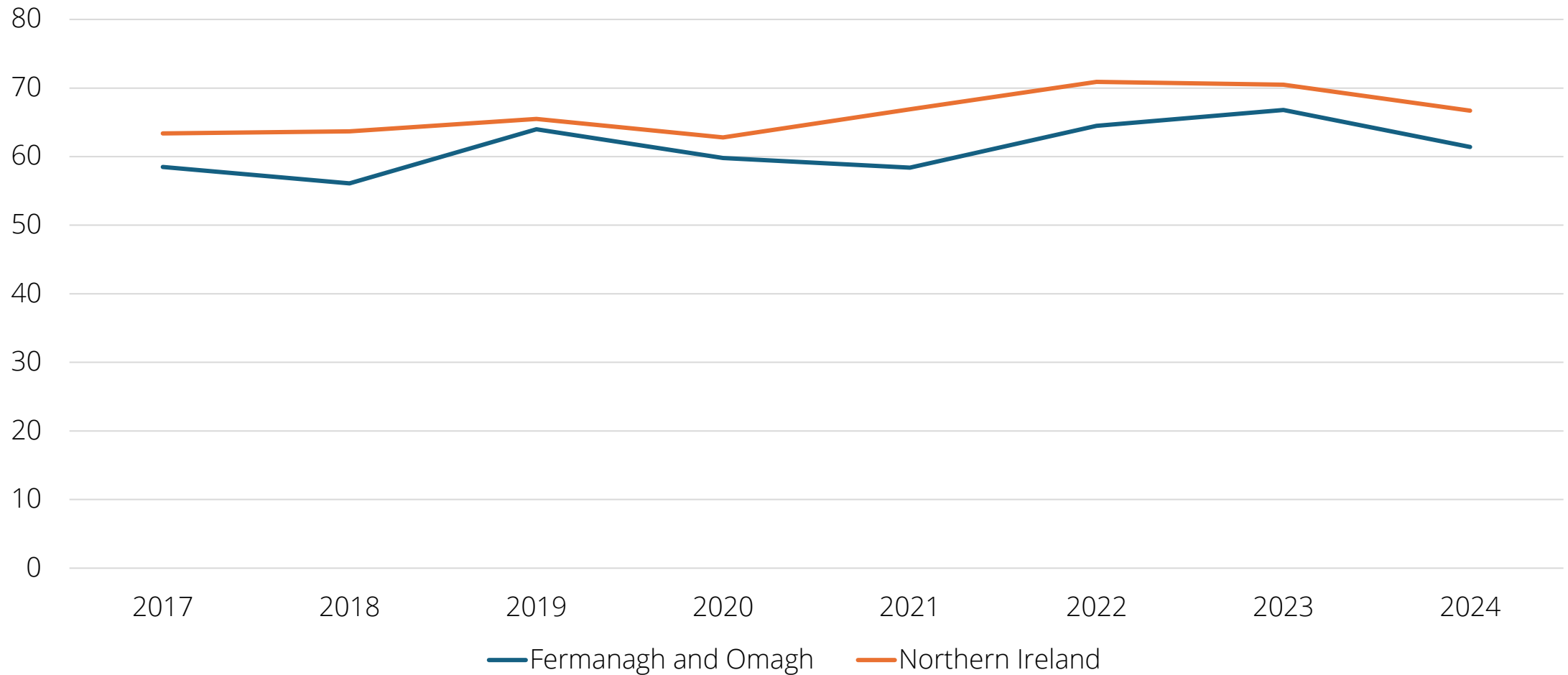
NISRA was commissioned to develop a 'good jobs' measure designed to monitor three areas which are fundamental to all jobs:

- a permanent contract;
- a non-zero hour contract;
- earning the Real Living Wage or above.

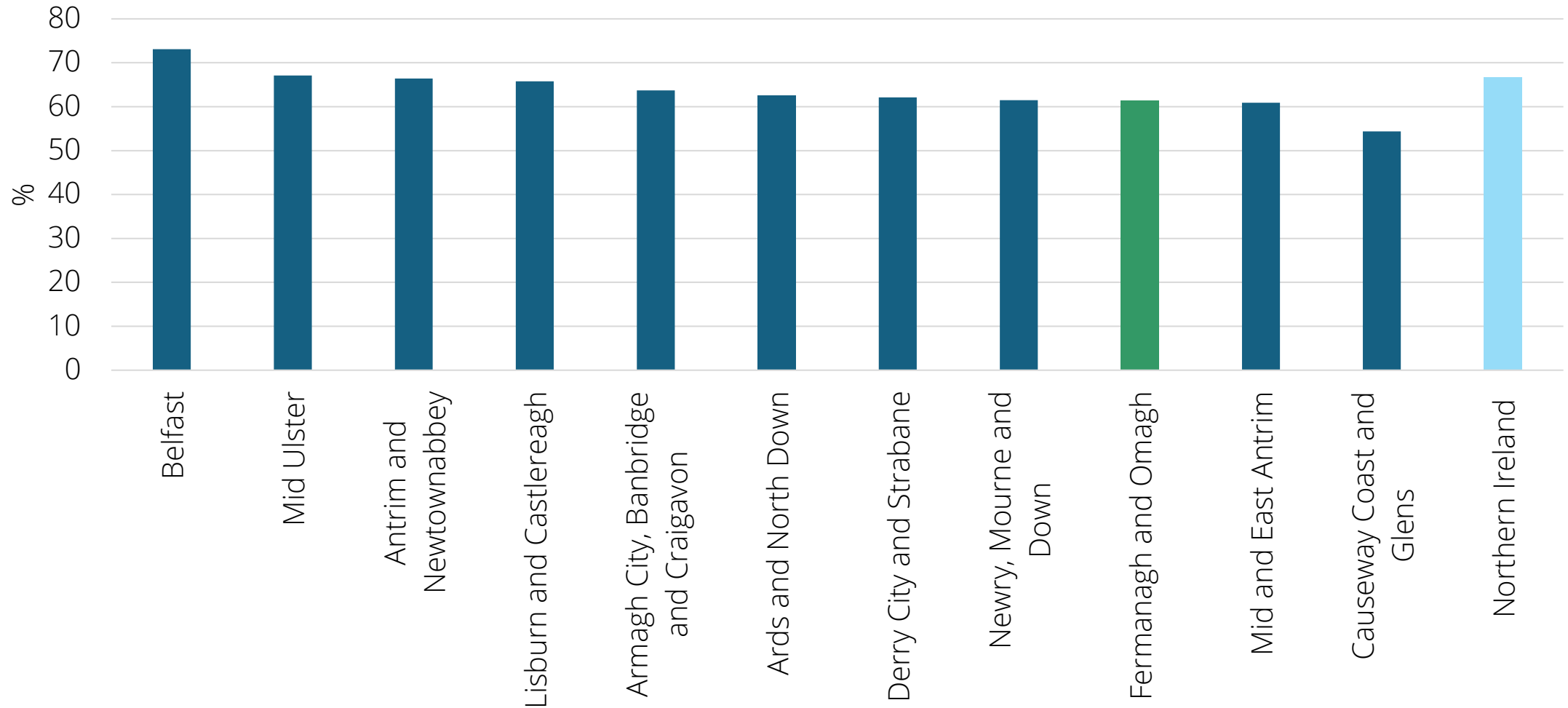
i.e – as a minimum, we are seeking to ensure all workers have a decent and secure income.

# **The Local Picture**

# Percentage of employees in NI (aged 16-64) meeting three good jobs criteria



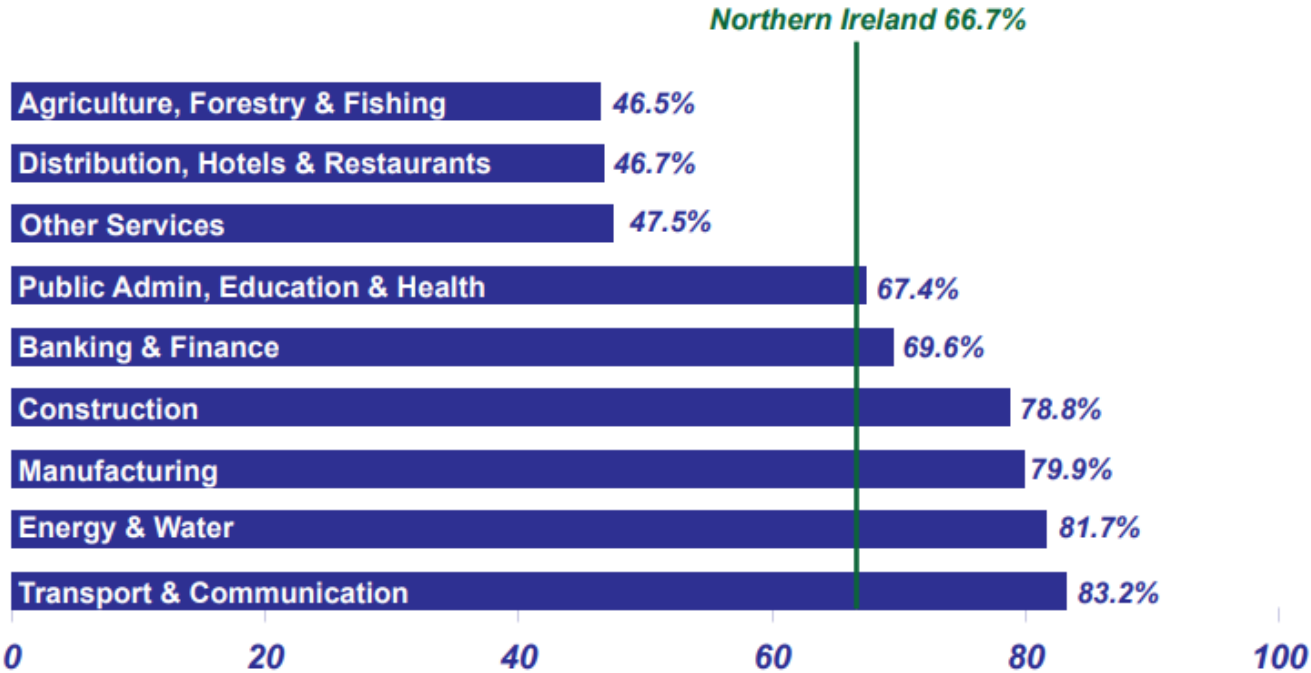
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# Percentage of good jobs by Industry Sector 2024

## Northern Ireland 66.7%

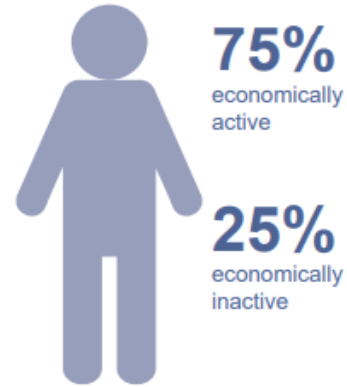


## Labour Market Structure (2023)

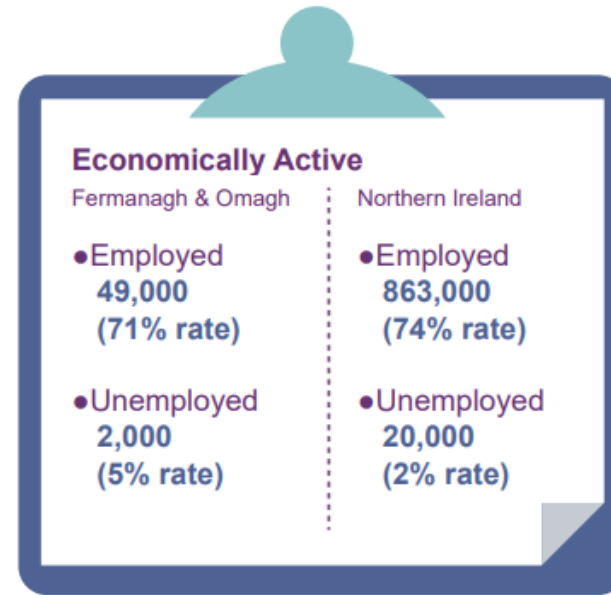
Fermanagh & Omagh



Northern Ireland



Source: Labour Force Survey, NISRA



## Unemployment Claimants (2024)



The labour market structure is composed of the economically active (people in employment and seeking work) and inactive (not seeking nor available for work). These data are provided through the Labour Force Survey (LFS), the largest regular household sample survey in Northern Ireland. **Total numbers in employment do not equate to total jobs as a person can have more than one job.**

Unemployment annual averages data is derived from the Claimant Count as LFS figures fall below suppression thresholds. This is an administrative data source based on the numbers claiming unemployment-related benefits. It uses a different definition of unemployment to the LFS.

Both measures of the labour market are based on the working-age (16-64) population.

## Productivity Work-Place Based (2022)

Productivity is based on the Regional Gross Value Added (Balanced) in Current Prices (£). Regional GVA is the value generated by any unit engaged in the production of goods and services.

Per head calculations are made using jobs, rather than the resident population as this can be subject to distortion (due to the effects of commuting and variations in age distribution).

## GVA per Filled Job (2018-2022)

Fermanagh & Omagh

**£43,434**

2018

**£55,782**

2022

% change 2018-22

▲ **28%**

Northern Ireland

**£48,915**

2018

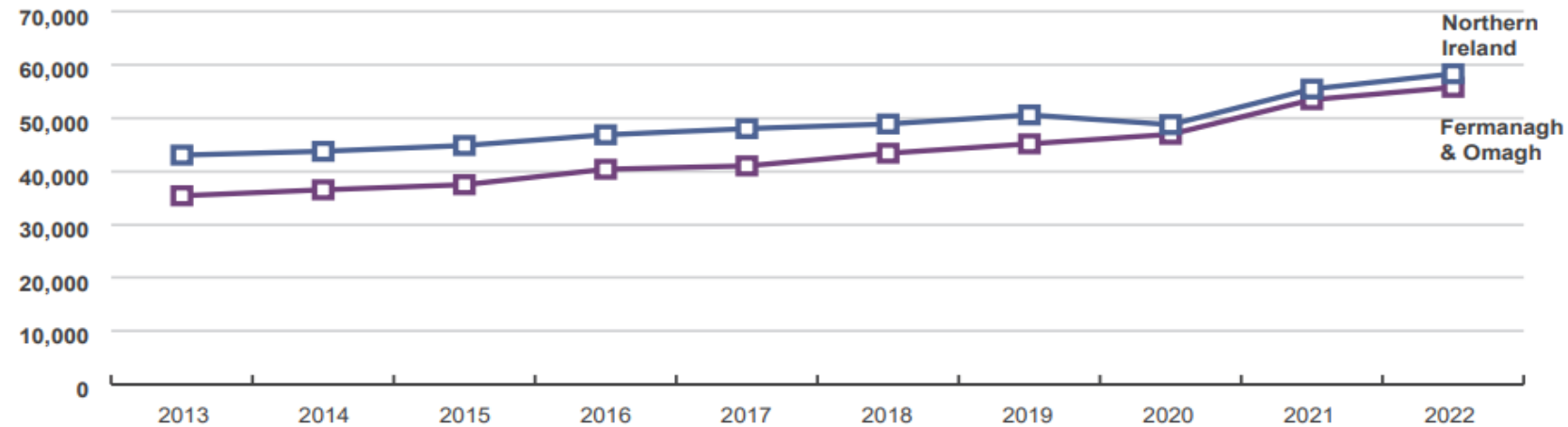
**£58,320**

2022

% change 2018-22

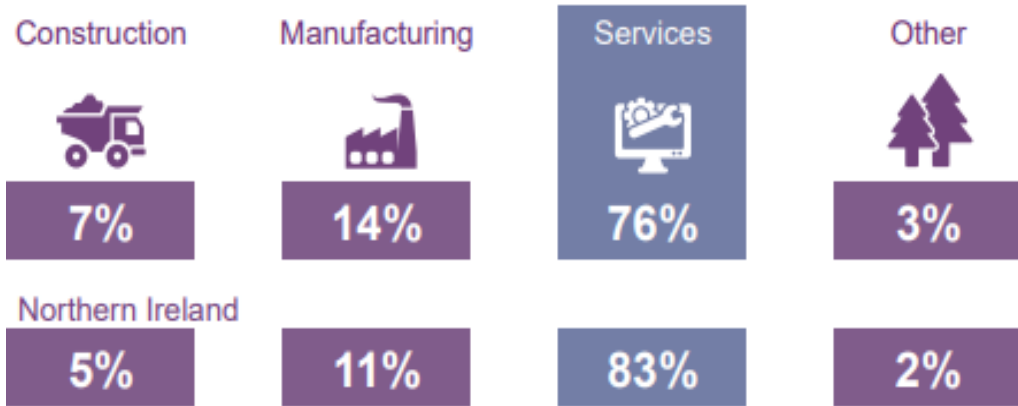
▲ **19%**

## GVA per Filled Job (2013-2022)

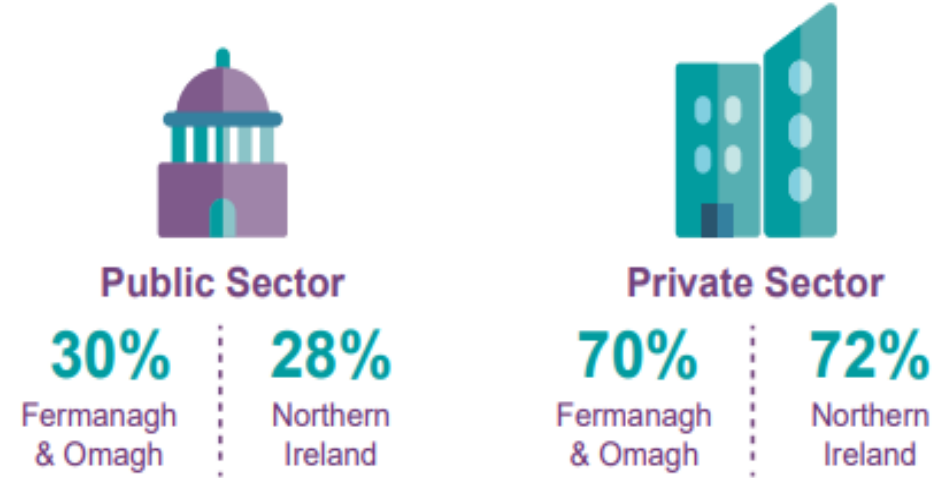


Source: Regional GVA (Balanced), ONS

## Industry Sector

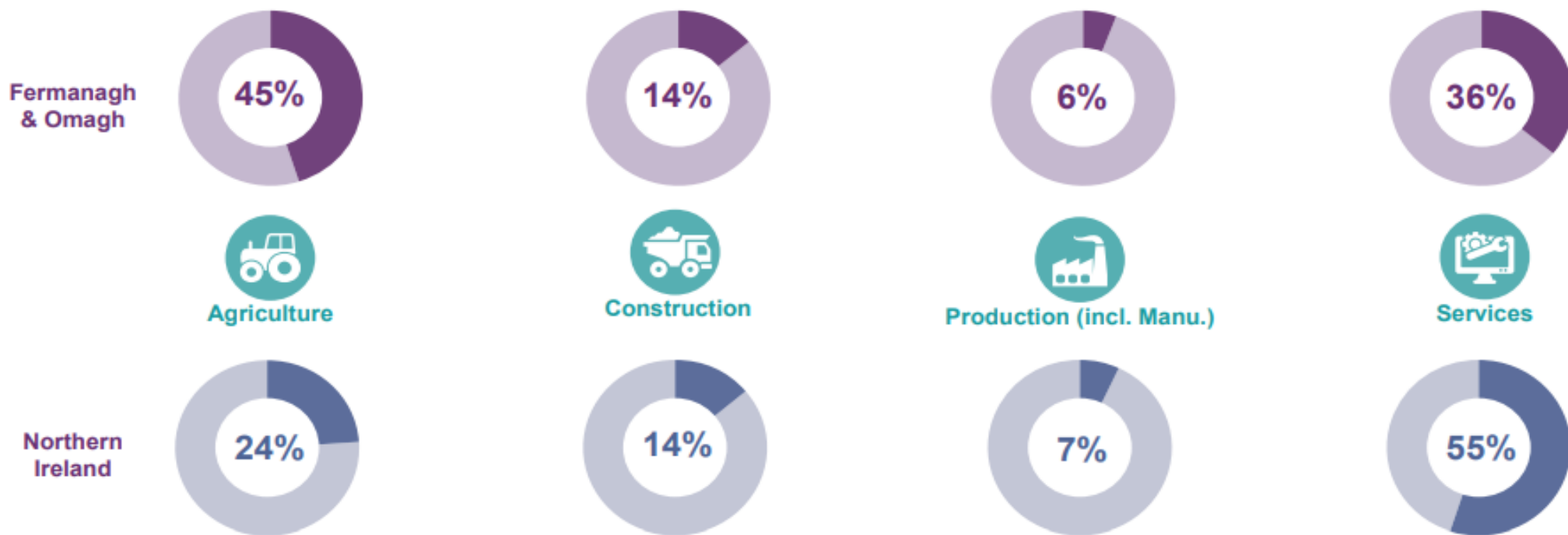


## Public/Private Sector



The Business Register and Employment Survey is a business census which provides employee jobs estimates. This is based on the location and number of jobs rather than the number of persons with a job; therefore, someone with two jobs will be counted twice. It **excludes agriculture employee jobs and self-employed** (not on a PAYE system).

## Businesses by Sector



Source: Inter Departmental Business Register, NISRA

# What does success on the good jobs agenda look like?

DfE Business Plan 2024/25 Successful delivery will mean:

Higher levels of pay and prosperity that benefits all, with fewer people earning below the Real Living Wage. More secure work with secure incomes in current and emerging sectors.

**Programme for Government:**

Subject to Executive approval, we propose to introduce new Employment Rights Legislation and a Good Work Charter to ensure better quality jobs and promote a healthy work-life balance.

# How can we grow the number of good jobs?

## Real Living Wage

- DfE has provided Advice NI with financial support to raise awareness and administer accreditation of the Living Wage Accreditation Scheme since 2024.
- Even if there are improvements in the proportion of workers earning below the Real Living Wage, it will be difficult to determine whether these gains are directly attributable to DfE initiatives or even NI Executive initiatives.
- But there are still things which can be done which would impact:
  - **Good Work Charter:** Establish A Good Work charter scheme with RLW as a core requirement (soft or hard).
  - **Procurement & Grants Integration:** Make RLW a condition of Government contracts and grant funding.
  - **Public sector implementation:** Extend RLW commitment across all publicly funded roles, including both social care and childcare, by ensuring its application not only in publicly procured services delivered by private or third-sector organisations but also in arms-length delivery or services provided directly by local councils.

# Priority sectors

- Key to raising productivity and driving economic growth in NI.
- Balances job creation with high-value added jobs.
- However, productivity growth alone does not guarantee good jobs - policy interventions are needed to ensure productivity levels, decent wages, security etc...
- The need to ensure that good jobs agenda is embedded in all priority sectoral plans.
- Data concerns:
  - Sectoral productivity data
  - Regional productivity data



Table 16: Invest NI New Jobs above Real Living Wage (2018-19 to 2022-23)

Year	Over	Under	Total	% Over RLW
2019-20	5,394	328	5,722	94%
2020-21	3,292	114	3,406	97%
2021-22	2,909	598	3,507	83%
2022-23	3,318	341	3,659	91%
2023-24	3,648	316	3,965	92%
<b>Total</b>	<b>18,561</b>	<b>1,697</b>	<b>20,259</b>	<b>92%</b>

Source: Invest NI

# Lifelong Learning & Opportunities for Career Development

- NI has the lowest proportion of people (25-64) in employment receiving job-related training in the UK (18% vs. 26%).
- Only 5% of NI workers are pursuing qualifications or enrolled in education, compared to 8% UK-wide.
- Consistent underperformance over the past 20 years.
- 60% employees report opportunities for career progression, substantial differences by skill level and age.

# The 'Good Jobs' employment rights bill

- The consultation on the proposed Good Jobs Bill contains 31 proposals under four themes.
- 19 proposals (over 60%) align Northern Ireland with Britain's standards.
- The remaining 12 proposals are under active consideration by the British Government to prevent workers in Northern Ireland from being left behind.
- However, achieving parity should not be our only ambition.

# Employment Legislation Consultation Themes

- Terms of employment
- Pay and benefits
- Voice and Representation
- Work-life balance

# Existing Community Planning Population Indicators

- Outcome 5: Our economy is thriving, expanding and outward looking
- This outcome focuses on three big issues:
  - job growth
  - economic inactivity
  - productivity.

# The Indicators Question

- I understand you're considering whether to stick with a raw 'number of jobs' indicator - or to align with the PfG's "Good Jobs" framing.
- *My view: what we measure, is what matters.*
- If we only count jobs, we'll chase numbers.
- If we measure job quality, we start asking the right questions about what work means in this place - and how it can improve lives.
- My recommendation is to measure quantity and quality.

# Final Thoughts / Provocation

- What would it mean for Fermanagh & Omagh to be known not just for having jobs, but for having **good** jobs?
- What if this region became the blueprint for how the regional balance agenda can drive the good jobs, productivity and decarbonisation agenda?
- What if the local economic partnership focused its resources to this aim?

Jobs that people want to stay for. Jobs that give young people a reason to come back. Jobs that let people thrive in - in the place they call home.

The challenge - and the opportunity - is to be intentional about the kind of labour market you're shaping for here.