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Department for the Economy
An Roinn Geilleagair
www.economy-ni.gov.uk

EPIC FUTURES NI

Northern Ireland Skills Barometer

NERI labour market conference
May 2025

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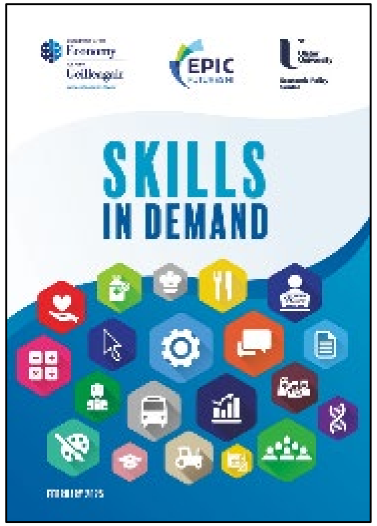
Skills Barometer Background

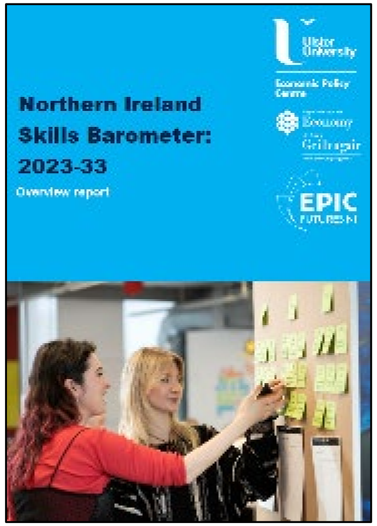
UUEPC were originally commissioned in 2015 to report on the quantum of future skill requirements for NI by DfE.

The NI Skills Barometer involved the development of an economic model to forecast future skills needs across sectors and occupations, and skills gaps by qualification level and subject area. The project has been updated at two-year intervals.

Overall, the quantitative findings of the research have continued to benefit a wide range of stakeholders including;

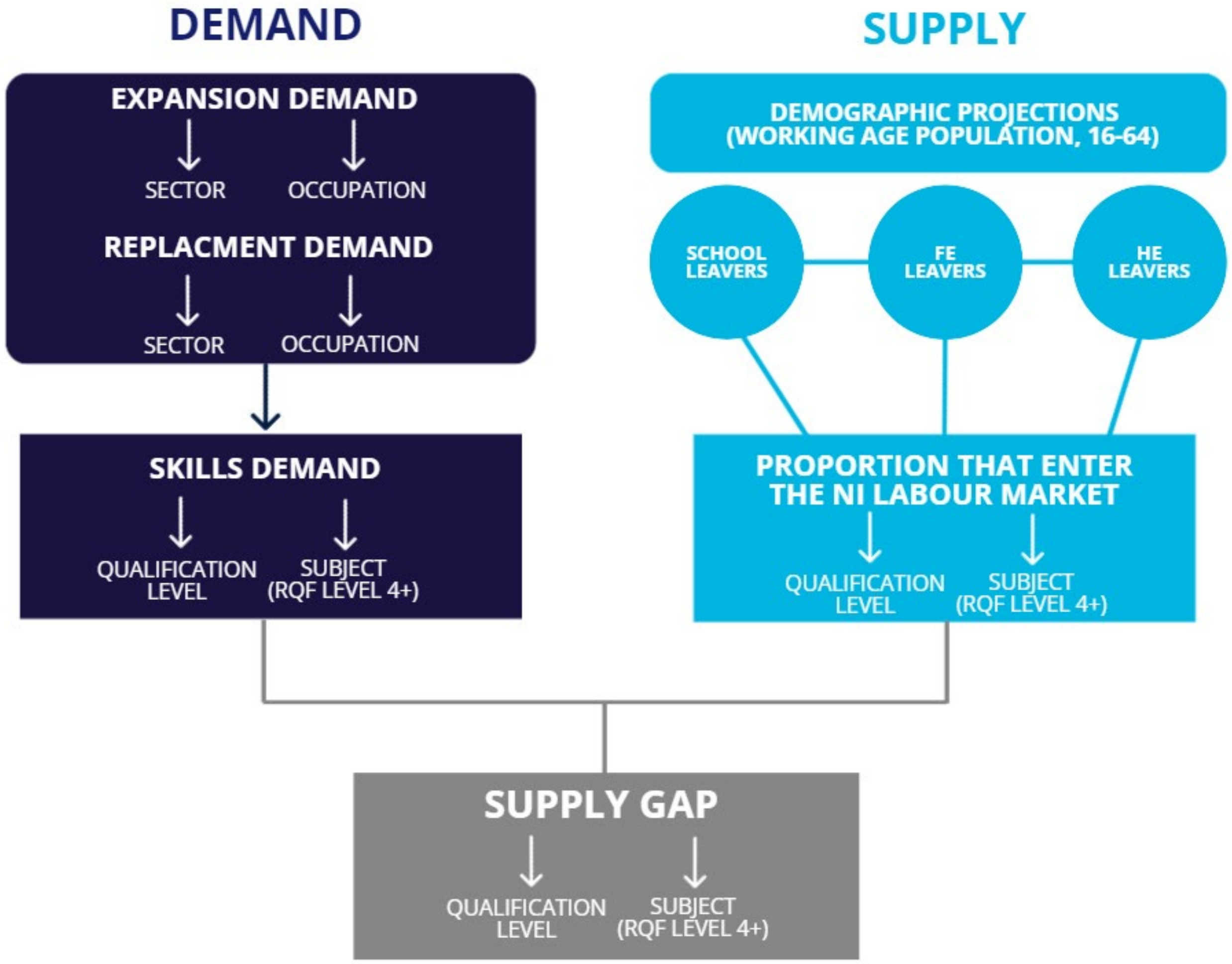
- Careers advisors, young people and parents;
- Teachers and schools;
- Business groups;
- DfE; and
- Wider government.





Publications available via: https://www.economy-ni.gov.uk/publications/skills-barometer-2023-2033

Methodological approach



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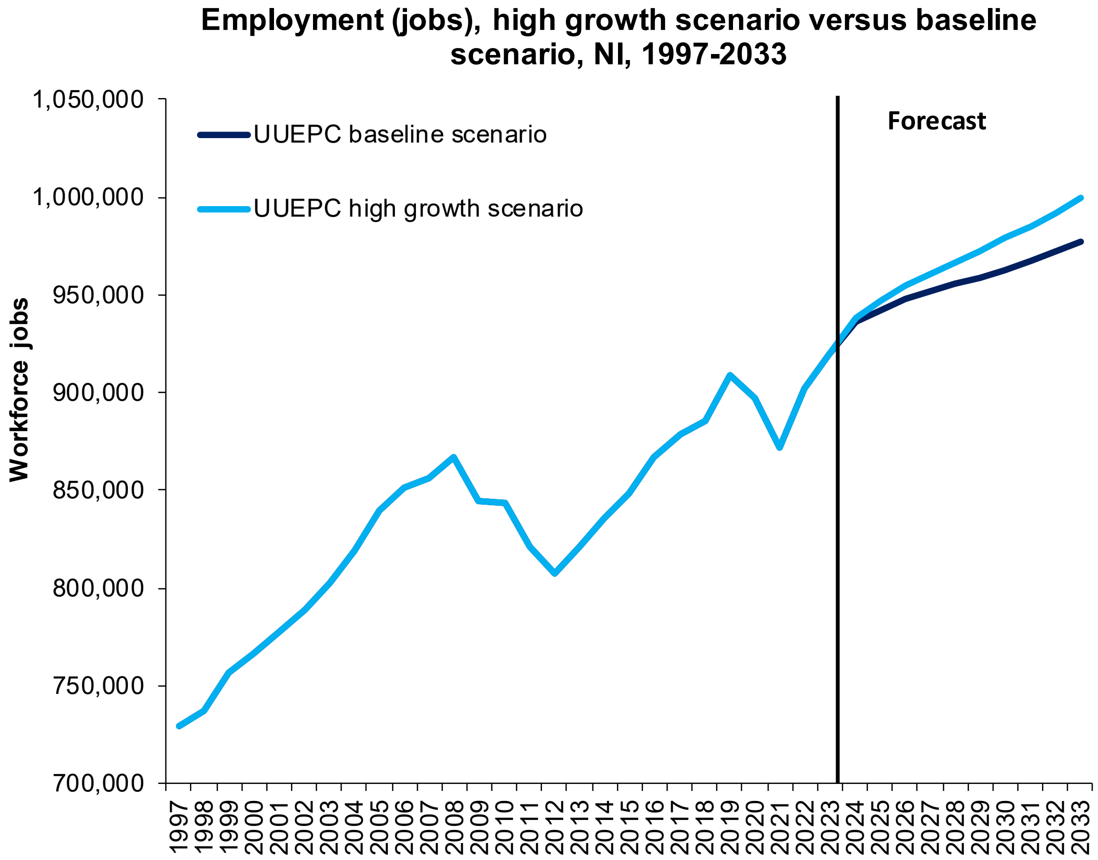
Demand

UUEPC economic model



Source: UUEPC

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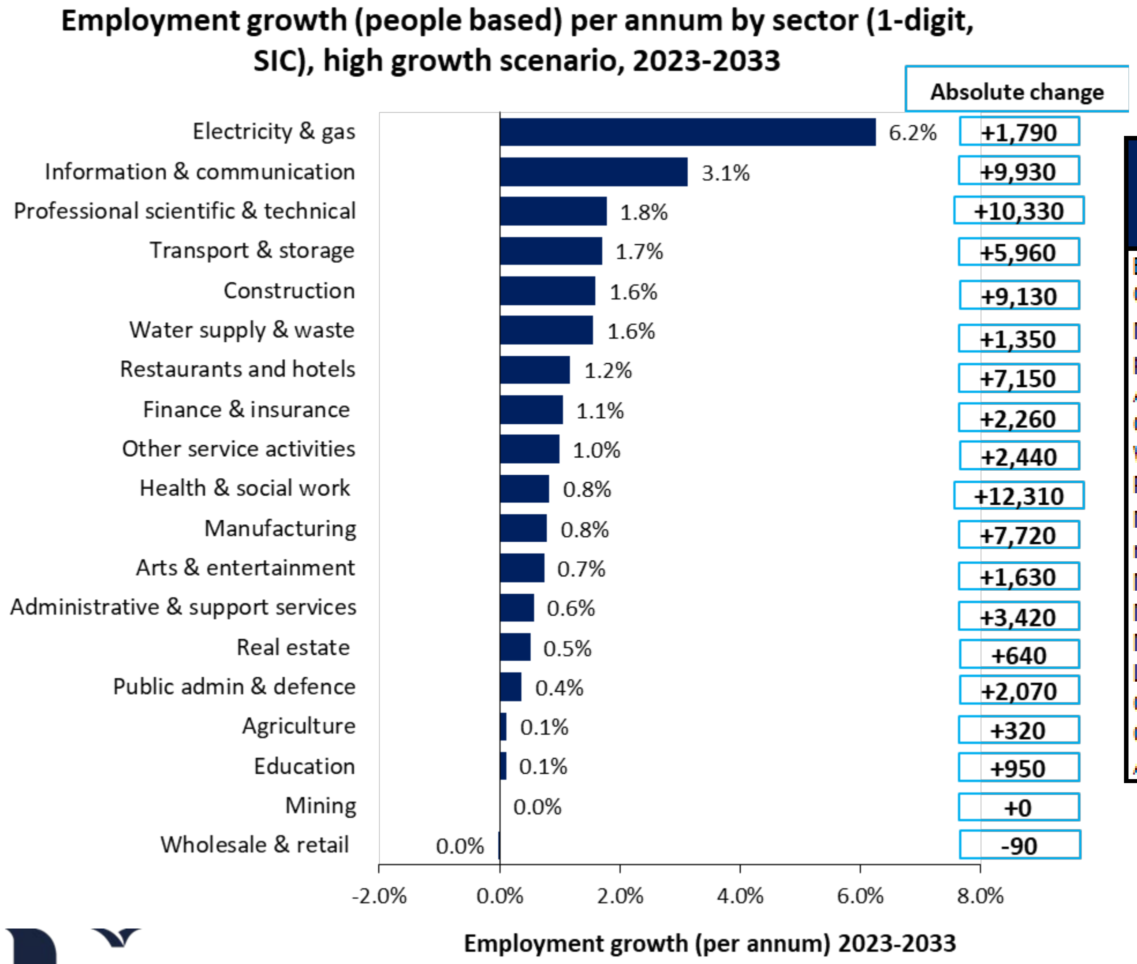
The high growth scenario forecasts an 79k jobs over the 2023-2033 period, compared to 58k in the baseline. **Skills research focus on the high growth scenario.**

Sector forecasts (jobs based)



Top 15 growth sectors (2-digit) (*based on CAGR*)	High growth scenario (absolute terms)	High growth scenario (2023-2033)
Electricity, gas, steam and air conditioning supply	+1,790	6.2%
Computer programming, consultancy and related activities	+9,550	4.6%
Manufacture of basic pharmaceutical products and pharmaceutical preparations	+1,490	4.0%
Activities auxiliary to financial services and insurance activities	+2,730	3.5%
Other professional, scientific and technical activities	+2,010	3.4%
Warehousing and support activities for transportation	+2,660	3.3%
Repair and installation of machinery and equipment	+610	3.0%
Motion picture, video and television programme production, sound recording and music publishing activities	+660	2.5%
Manufacture of other transport equipment	+1,900	2.5%
Manufacture of basic metals	+370	2.4%
Manufacture of chemicals and chemical products	+630	2.3%
Legal and accounting activities	+4,920	2.1%
Construction of buildings	+3,330	2.1%
Civil engineering	+2,190	2.0%
Activities of head offices; management consultancy activities	+2,180	2.0%

Source: Workforce Jobs, UUEPC
Note: Figures may not sum due to rounding.
Note: The labour market outlook is presented in 'job-based' terms and therefore differs from forecasts calculated on 'people-based' terms (i.e. some people have more than one job). It is essential to convert the forecasts from 'jobs' to 'people' based to determine the skills requirements of the labour market.

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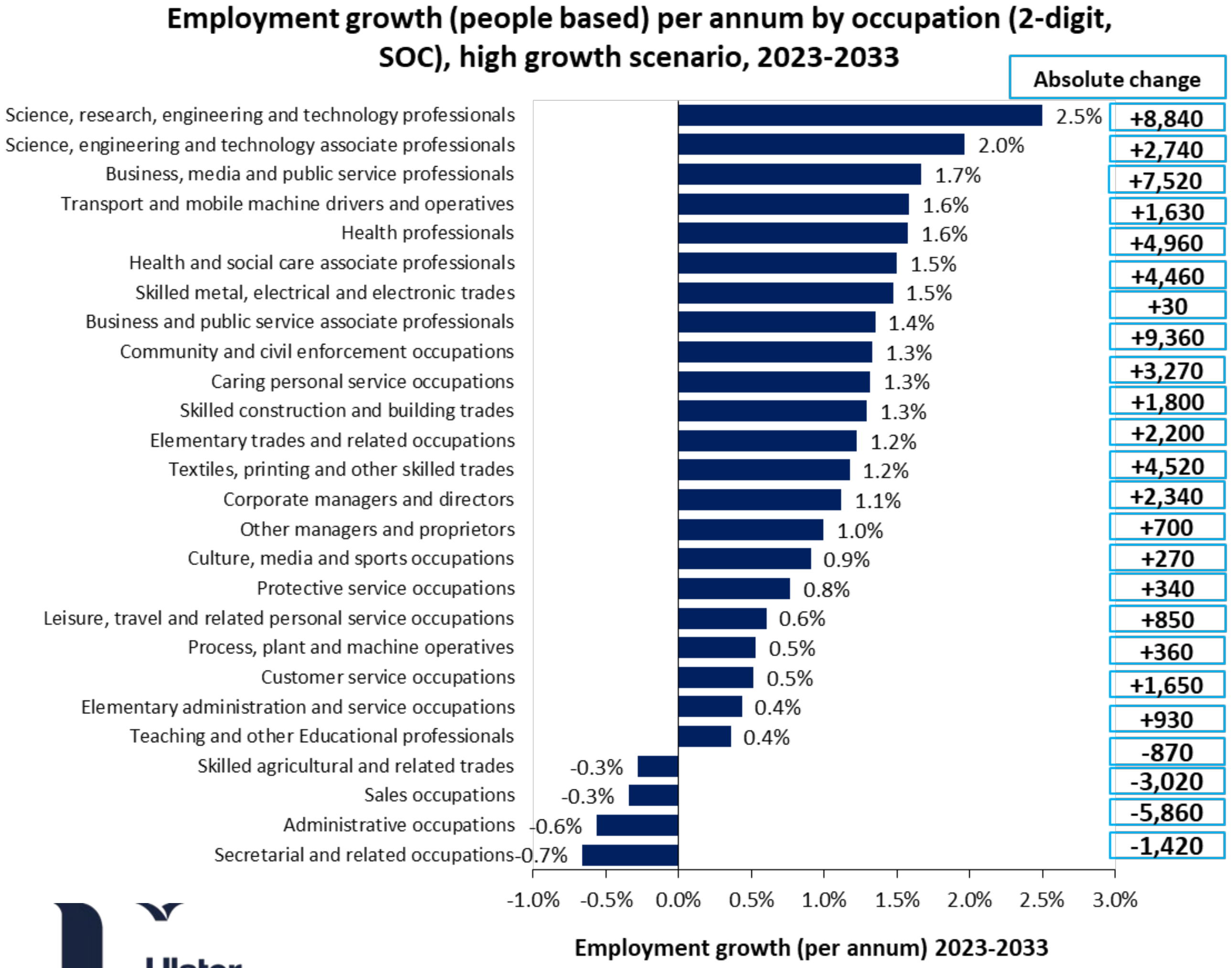
Occupation forecasts (jobs based)



Top 20 growth occupations (4-digit) *(based on CAGR)*	High growth scenario (absolute terms)	High growth scenario (2023-2033)
Data analysts	+1,020	5.9%
Cyber security professionals	+280	4.6%
Research and development (R&D) managers	+500	4.3%
IT network professionals	+180	3.8%
Pharmaceutical technicians	+370	3.5%
IT quality and testing professionals	+190	3.5%
Programmers and software development professionals	+3,250	3.4%
Business, research and administrative professionals n.e.c.	+640	3.4%
IT business analysts, architects and systems designers	+800	3.3%
Conservation professionals	+100	3.2%
Health associate professionals n.e.c.	+140	3.2%
Medical and dental technicians	+30	3.2%
IT managers	+330	3.2%
IT project managers	+1,110	3.1%
Environment professionals	+230	3.1%
Information technology professionals n.e.c.	+260	3.1%
Actuaries, economists and statisticians	+510	3.0%
Project support officers	+520	2.9%
Legal professionals n.e.c.	+410	2.9%
Legal associate professionals	+390	2.8%

Source: Workforce Jobs, UUEPC
Note: Figures may not sum due to rounding.
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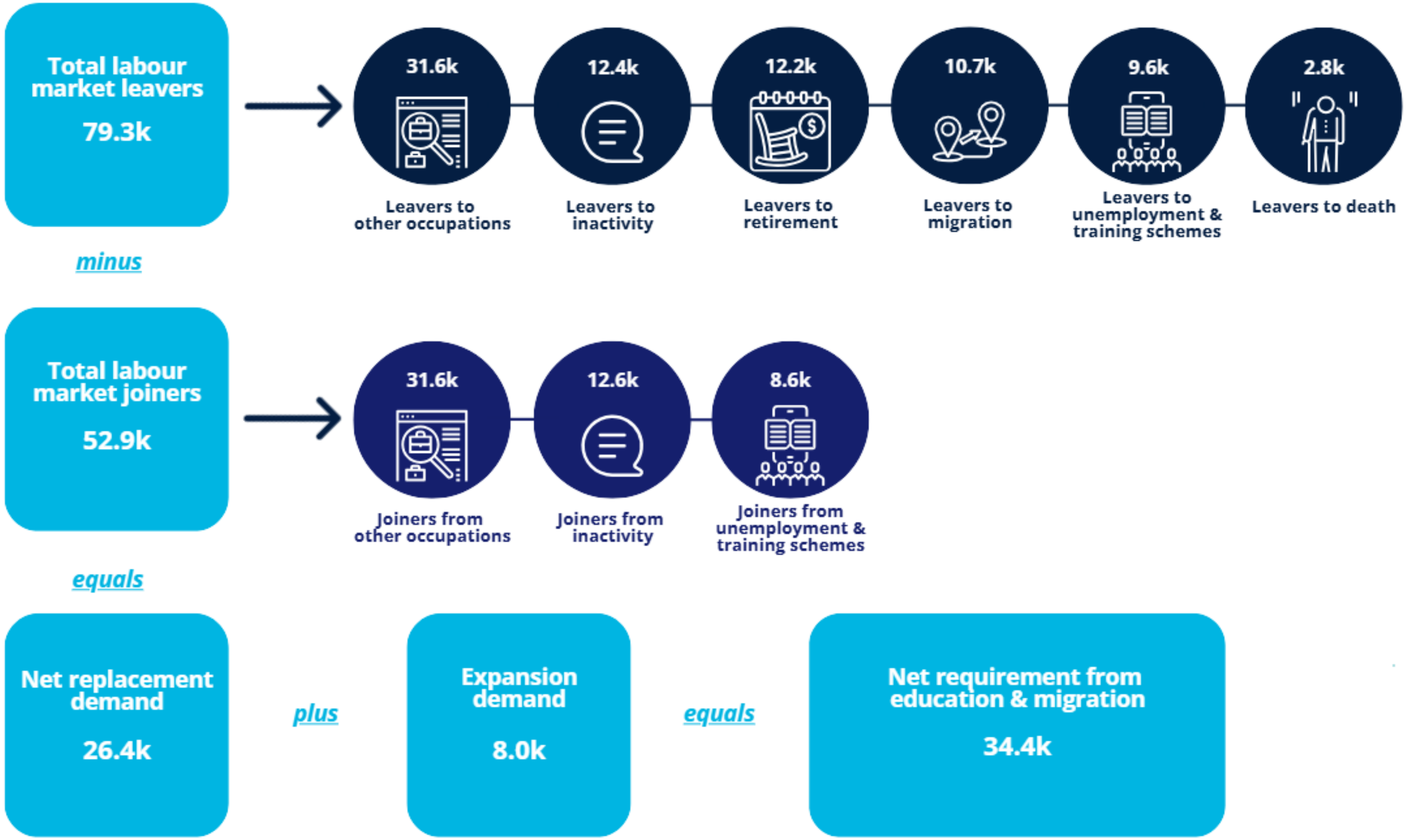
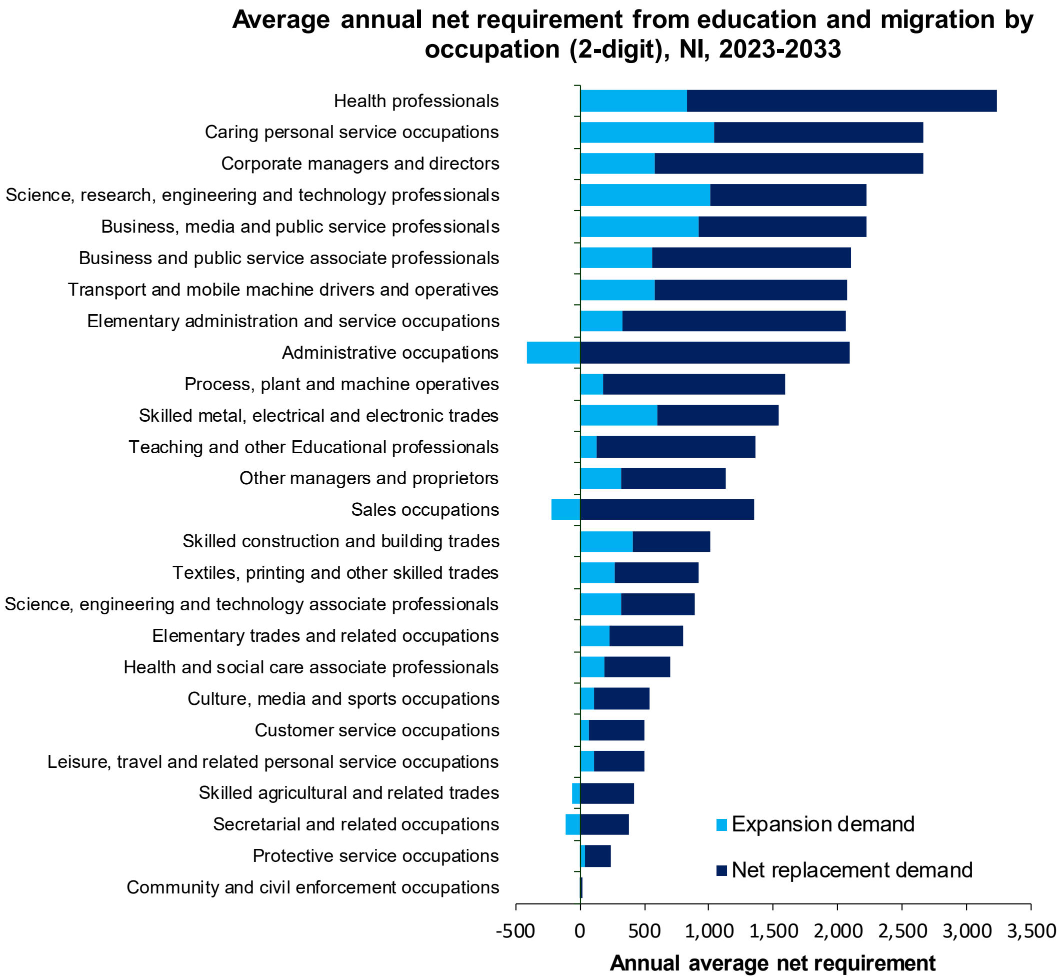
Annual average labour market flows, 2023-2033 (people based)





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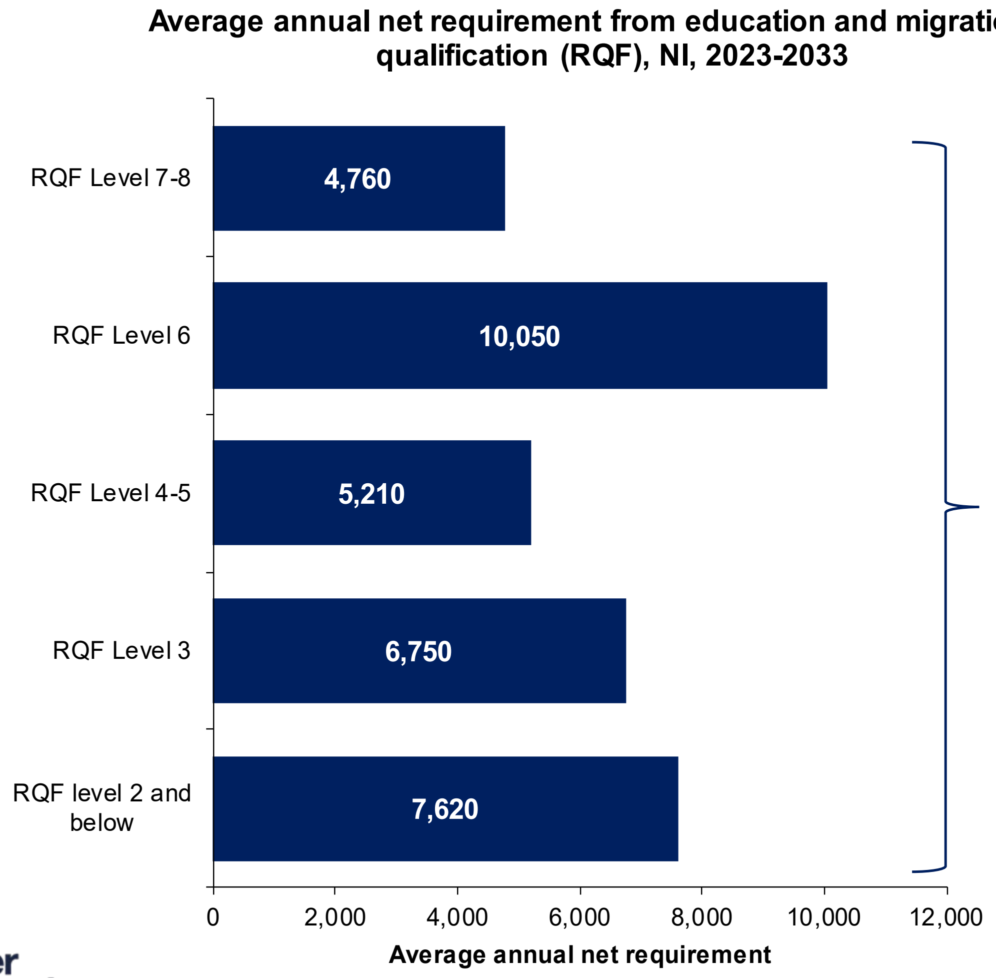
Source: UUEPC
Note: Figures may not sum due to rounding.

Demand from education and migration by qualification



43% of the net requirement require at least degree level qualifications

Average annual net requirement 34.4k

Source: UUEPC

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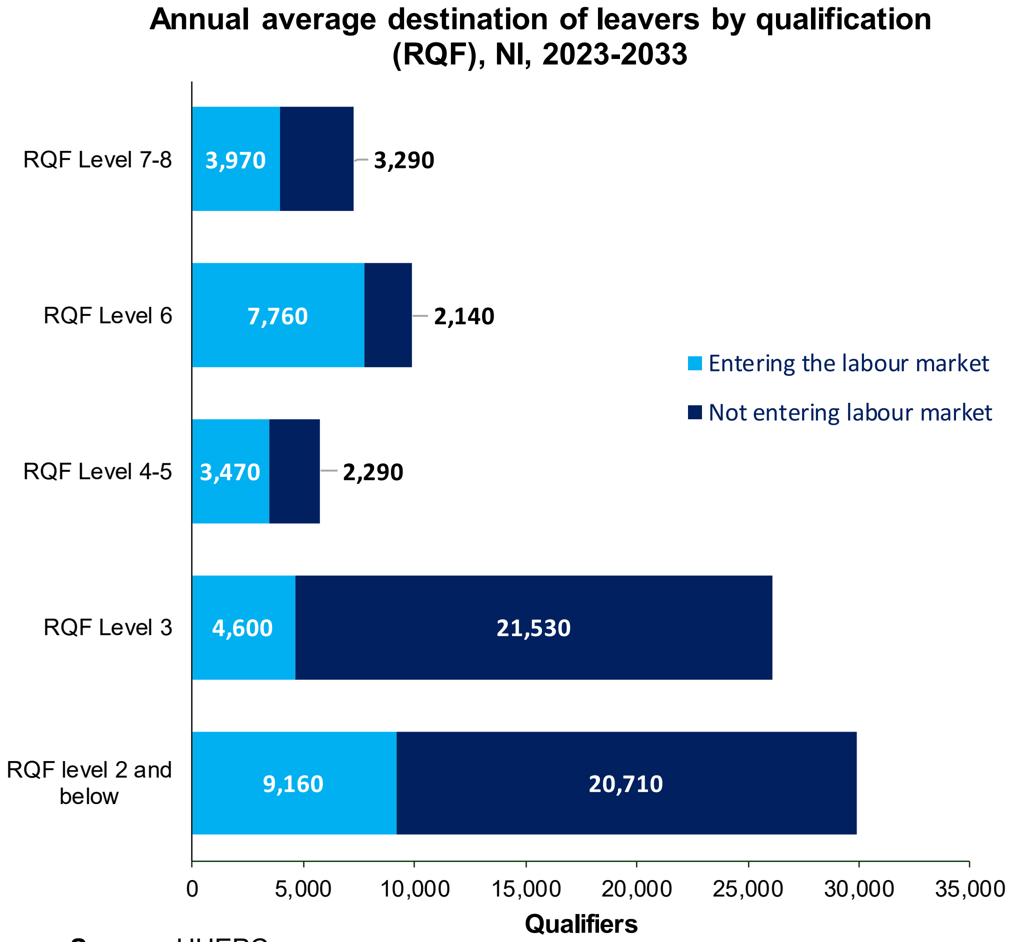
Supply and (im)balances

Destination of leavers by qualification level



Source: UUEPC

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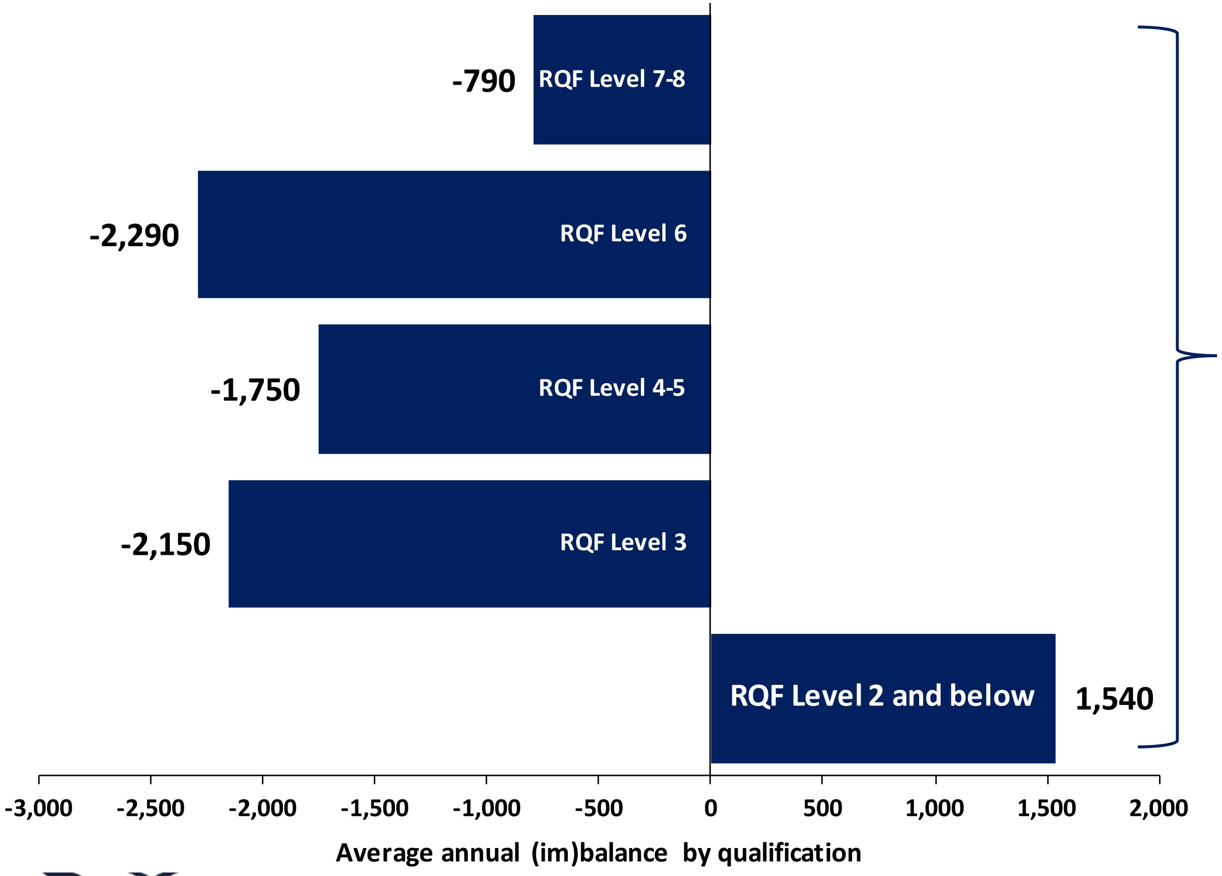
Note: This graphic includes data from the NI School Leavers survey. Therefore, school qualifiers who did not leave the institution after qualifying are not included (i.e. GCSE qualifiers remaining in the same school to study A-levels, or equivalent).

Qualification (im)balances

Average annual (im)balance by qualification (RQF), NI, 2023-2033



An average overall undersupply of -5,440 individuals per annum indicates a need to reactivate underutilised labour and/or increase the migrant labour supply.

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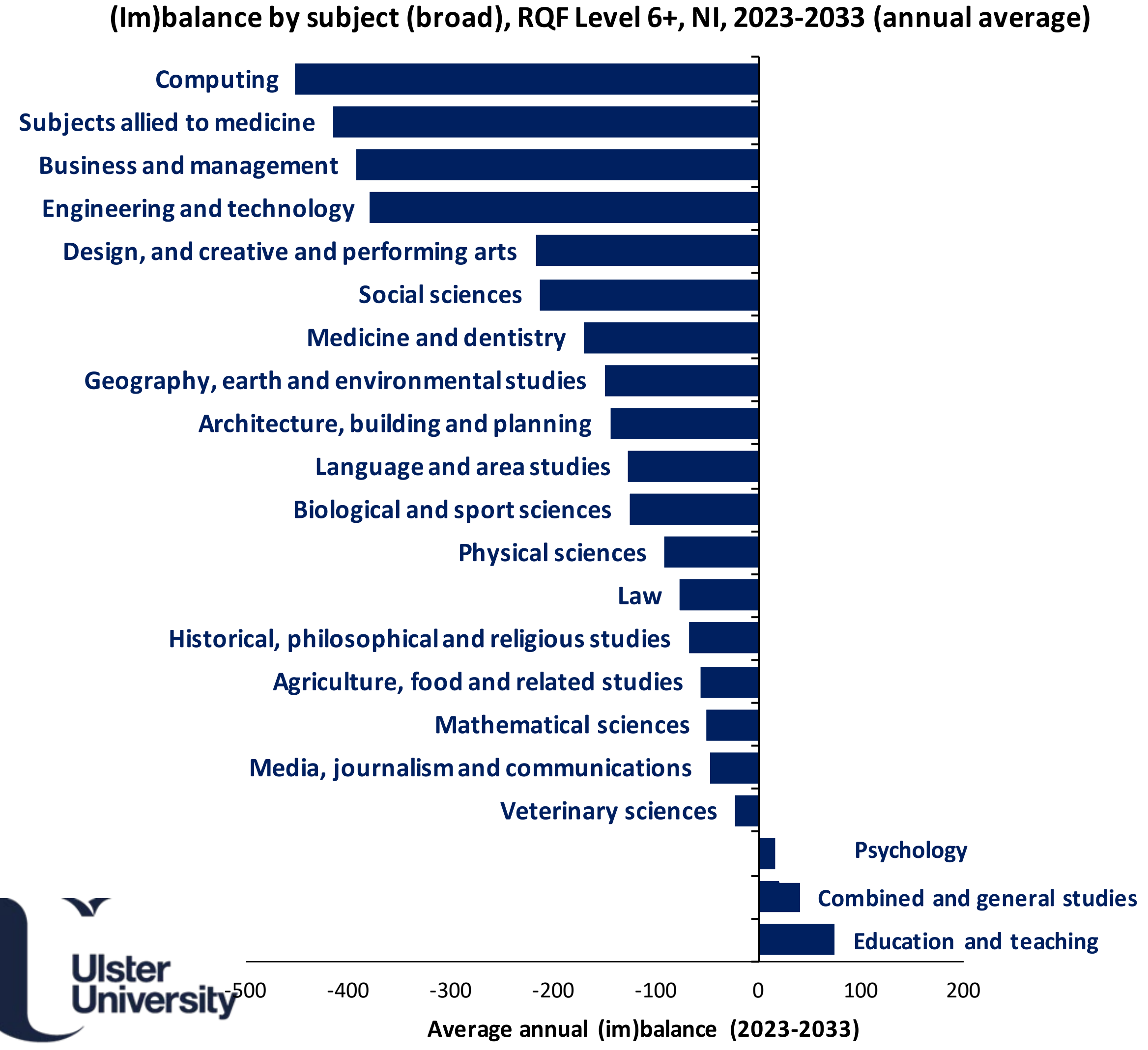
Source: UUEPC

Note: The supply gaps in the above chart have been calculated based on 'net supply'. This takes account of migration patterns amongst qualifiers at NI Higher Education Institutions (HEI) and NI domiciled qualifiers qualifying from Great Britain (GB) HEI's, in addition to labour force participation.

Note: For some qualifiers it may be the case they require additional employability skills before accessing employment in a job commensurate to their level of qualification.

Subject (im)balances - STEAM



Undergraduate – Most undersupplied

- Subjects allied to medicine
- Computing
- Business and management

Postgraduate – Most undersupplied

- Engineering and technology
- Computing
- Business and management

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Source: UUEPC

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Policy considerations

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Policy considerations

Skills should remain at the core of economic development policy - importance of skills to achieve a high growth economy based on ‘good jobs’ is well established, as are the improved returns to individuals regarding employment and earnings prospects.

Rethinking NI’s growth model - *The era of ‘easy’ recruitment is over, as labour shortages limit capacity for employment growth* – demographic dividend is over, unemployment is low and profile of inactive is more weighted towards sickness creating a shallow pool of labour to fill a moderate level of vacancies above replacement demand. Tackle productivity challenges (not underestimated, but possible).

A strategy is needed to play the numbers game and avoid a decade of persistent skills shortages.

- (economically inactive, older workers, importing skills from outside NI, retention of talent – both domestic and international, modes of education delivery).
- Only scratching the surface with this macro overview
  - Reporting outputs include much more detail on wider issues such as lifelong learning, transversal skills and comparative analysis of qualifications compared to GB.
- **Next steps** – Sector reports and sub-regional skills analysis.

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