

SWOT analysis about the labour market for County Meath, Ireland

Spatial structure:

County Meath is located in the Mid-East of Ireland and is in the province of Leinster. It is bordered by the counties of Louth, Dublin, Cavan, Westmeath, Offaly and Kildare. Meath County Council are the local authority for the county and the population of the county is 184,034 according to the 2011 census. Meath is the 14th largest of Ireland's 26 counties in area and 9th largest in terms of population. It is the second largest of Leinster's 12 counties in size and third largest in terms of population. County Meath also has the only two Gaeltacht areas (areas where Irish is the primary spoken language) in the province of Leinster, at Ráth Cairn and Baile Ghib. There are 2,603 Irish language speakers in County Meath, with 1,299 native speakers in the Meath Gaeltacht. In addition there are 1,304 attending the seven Gaelscoils outside the Meath Gaeltacht area. The area of the county is 2,342 km². The data of vital statistics from the third quarter of 2011 showed there were 936 births (493 male and 443 female). Outside Dublin, this was the second highest number of births in Leinster, after Kildare (996). The birth rate for Meath (21.5 per 1,000 population) has increased in line with the national picture (17 per 1,000 population in Ireland) but at a higher rate.

Transport connection/infrastructure (public transport, highways):

Located just 30 minutes north of Dublin in the North East of Ireland and at the heart of Ireland's Boyne Valley, County Meath can boast an unrivalled and enviable location at the hub of four major motorways - the M1, M2, M3 and M4. County Meath is located only 30 minutes from Dublin International Airport while the ferry ports in Dublin, Dun Laoghaire and Belfast are also convenient. Regular train services from Dublin stop at Laytown, Drogheda and Dunboyne while there are frequent bus services throughout County Meath from Dublin. There is a commuter train service from Enfield. Although the service is very infrequent (only 8 trains a day to Dublin with no direct trains 4 pm - 9 pm), not many villages like Enfield have a commuter service at all. Navan is currently served by a spur railway line from the Dublin-Belfast main line, for freight traffic (zinc and lead concentrates from Tara Mines in Navan to Dublin Port) connecting at Drogheda. The direct rail line remains abandoned, though its path is reasonably intact, and plans are drawn up to reopen it in line with current government transport policy. However, this plan has now been put on hold due to the economic downturn.

Economic structure:

In common with other counties with thriving agricultural and traditional local industrial sectors, like Westmeath, Wexford, Kilkenny and Monaghan, Meath has few multinational investment facilities. Drogheda, Blanchardstown, Swords, and Leixlip are neighbouring towns that provide employment in this regard, however. Europe's largest underground lead-zinc mine, Tara Mines, has operated since 1977, at a location to the west of Navan. The current ore production from the mine is 2,600,000 tonnes of ore per year, containing over 200,000 tonnes of zinc metal. Glacial deposits of gravel exist in a band stretching from the Offaly border at Edenderry, to the sea at Laytown. This is the basis of a long running quarrying tradition. A large cement plant near Duleek is situated in this territory. Further to this there are meat processing plants in Clonee and Navan, and horse breeding and training are also popular industries locally.

Furthermore, historically Navan was a manufacturing town, involved in the household goods sector. Navan was the centre of the Irish Furniture industry. Gradually this has declined as a source of employment, though it has acted as a source of inspiration for other ventures producing finished

products for the construction industry. Navan was also the centre of the Irish Carpet making industry, before this was lost to overseas competition.

While traditionally the main industry in Meath has been agriculture, recently production volumes have decreased due to competition for labour from other sectors of the economy. Migrant labour from Eastern Europe has helped however. Meath is Ireland's leading county producer of potatoes, and a significant producer of beef, barley, milk, wheat, and root vegetables.

Employees, proportion of men/women, home country nationals/migrants:

According to the Census 2006, in total in Meath there were 19,705 males in employment, and 18,445 females. Of these males, 1,705 were professional worker, 6,986 were managerial and technical, 3,379 were non-manual, 3,290 were skilled-manual, 1,493 were semi-skilled and 437 were unskilled. The remaining males who were gainfully occupied but unknown summed to 2,415. Of the total of 18,445 females in employment, 1,589 were professional workers, 6,469 held managerial or technical positions, 3,209 were non-manual, 3,168 were skilled-manual, 1,413 were semi-skilled and 392 were unskilled workers. The remaining 2,205 females were gainfully occupied but their roles were unknown. The Census in 2006 is quite ambiguous in terms of the number of migrants living in Meath, as the figures for Black migrants and Black Irish and Asian migrants and Asian Irish are not separated but rather are presented in the same category. White Irish are divided into White Irish Traveller, White Irish and 'Any other White Background'. If we take the latter to mean foreign nationals, the majority of whom have come to Ireland from Eastern Europe, the number given for this cohort of people is 10,422. Of this cohort, 1,902 are from Poland; 2,173 are Lithuanian and 2,144 are from other nations in the EU25.

Unemployment rate:

Census 2006 reveals that at that time there were 7,341 males and 608 females employed in the construction industry. While the figures for Census 2011 have yet to be released, considering the severity of the recession in this industry locally, it is possible to estimate that the size of this sector is what has led to the crippling unemployment which is rife in Meath at present. According to the Irish National Agency of the Unemployed (INOU), the number of persons currently unemployed in Meath had risen to 11,951 in January 2012, and now stands at 11,418 as of June 2012. Of these 7,101 are male and 4,317 are female. These figures are down from 12,057 in January 2011. It is thought that a combination of new work placement and community employment programmes has helped the decline in unemployment rates in Meath, along with many jobseekers emigrating, or returning to education to up-skill.

Number of people without any graduation, proportion of low and high qualified people:

According to Census 2006, the educational breakdown of the 43,584 males in employment is as follows: 56 have no formal education; 14,467 have lower secondary education or less; 9,203 have upper secondary level; 5,675 have a vocational qualification; 5,141 have attained a primary University degree and 2,360 have some form of post-graduate qualification, with 208 males at PhD level. Of the 2,308 jobseekers, 35 had no formal education; 1,314 had attained lower secondary or less; 402 had upper secondary education; 172 had a vocational qualification; 84 had attained at least a primary University degree and 50 had completed post-graduate study with an additional 2 who had attained a PhD qualification. Of the 29,970 females in employment, 33 had no formal education; 5,696 had attained a lower secondary level or less; 7,740 had reached upper secondary level; 2,309 had attained a vocational education; 4,835 had reached at least a primary University degree and 2,948 had attended and completed post-graduate studies, with 121 females awarded a PhD qualification. Of the



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female jobseekers in Meath in 2006, 15 had no formal education; 803 had attained lower secondary level or less; 456 had reached upper secondary level; 120 have a vocational qualification; 114 have at least a primary University degree and 76 have completed post-graduate study with one female attaining a PhD. In total in Meath the number of residents both male and female, employees and jobseekers without a formal education in 2006 sums to 450; 36,455 ceased education at lower secondary level and 23,111 left education following their Leaving Certificate exams at upper secondary level. In total in Meath in 2006 there were 85,411 people who had never attained a higher education or University degree or qualification. Of these 41,376 were female and 44,035 were male.