

POLITICAL UNCERTAINTY HINDERS HIRING IN NORTHERN IRELAND

MANPOWERGROUP EMPLOYMENT OUTLOOK SURVEY REVEALS A THREE POINT FALL IN NORTHERN IRELAND'S HIRING OPTIMISM

- **Outlook of +4% for the region**
- **Hospitality the region's standout sector**
- **Skills shortage in driving sector have led to pay increases of up to £1 an hour**

13 JUNE 2017: Political uncertainty surrounding the General Election has driven employers in Northern Ireland to become more cautious about hiring, according to ManpowerGroup, the world's workforce experts in the first employment survey to be published since the General Election. The Outlook has dropped three points to +4%, falling below the national average.

The ManpowerGroup Employment Outlook Survey is based on responses from 2,109 UK employers. It asks whether employers intend to hire additional workers or reduce the size of their workforce in the coming quarter. It is the most comprehensive, forward-looking employment survey of its kind and is used as a key economic statistic by both the Bank of England and the UK government.

Amanda White, Head of Specialist Markets at Manpower, said: "The political uncertainty we have seen across the UK in the past few months is even more pronounced in Northern Ireland due to questions about what happens about the border after Brexit. As a result, we're witnessing an especially cautious market here, most notably within the public sector and the supply chains that feed into the sector. Often during times of caution, we see a switch from permanent to temporary hiring, but right now even temporary opportunities remain static on the whole."

"Despite the fall in optimism this quarter, we are still in positive territory and there are some sectors that continue to demonstrate hiring optimism. The region's £1 billion hospitality sector remains buoyant, and we have not seen any slowdown in the ongoing need for restaurant and hotel workers. Some commentators have expressed concerns about the long term health of the hospitality sector if a border was reinstated between Northern Ireland and the Republic, but so far employers in the sector remain confident. With some five hotels currently under construction in Belfast alone, Northern Ireland's thriving hospitality sector is also having a knock-on effect on the region's construction industry, which has even surpassed the usual upturn in construction work at this time of year."

"Although hiring is quiet, many employers are seeking advice around pay and salary benchmarking as skills shortages are causing difficulties filling the reduced number roles they do have. We are seeing upwards pressure on pay in a number of areas, but none more so than driving, where HGV drivers have seen significant increases to their pay rates over the past year, up by between 75p and £1 per hour. Class 1 and 2 drivers can now expect to be paid in the region of £9 per hour due to the ongoing shortage of qualified drivers."

Nationally, companies are demonstrating cautious optimism with an Outlook of +5%, despite a triple whammy of uncertainty over the last few months - a snap election, the triggering of Article 50, and weak economic data for the first half of 2017. Whilst on first glance the election uncertainty might appear unhelpful to employers, ManpowerGroup believes that the shock result could offer hope for businesses who had feared the impact of a hard Brexit on hiring.

James Hick, ManpowerGroup Solutions Managing Director: “You might have expected hiring confidence to have taken a real hit, but employers have been standing firm. However, unquestionably they feared the outcome of a hard Brexit on the jobs market. The election result throws into question the Conservative commitment to slash immigration to the “tens of thousands” and double the levy on non-EU workers to £2,000. The simple truth is that some sectors will stall without skilled workers from overseas, which could result in the UK economy entering a tailspin.”

Hick continues: “People might be surprised to learn that in the last year 80,000 Bulgarians and Romanians entered the UK workforce, while the size of the UK-born workforce did not increase at all¹ – demonstrating just how accustomed we have become to a steady stream of labour from overseas. Slamming the door shut will leave us seriously exposed.”

It is a diverse picture across the regions this quarter. Yorkshire and Humber is top of the regional charts on +11%, its highest level since 2014. London is also riding high, with a five point jump this quarter, to +8%. It’s a mixed picture in the west: the West Midlands is up four points to +9%. But the South West is down three points to +1% (its lowest level since 2014), and the North West is also down three points to +3%. In the east of the country it’s also a pretty uneven picture: the North East and East of England are both in line with the national average (+5%) whereas the South East is up five points to +9%, but the East Midlands has slipped to +3%, its least optimistic outlook in over six years. Northern Ireland and Scotland (+2%) are both below the national average and Wales is at the bottom of the regional table with an Outlook of 0%, the lowest level for the country since 2014.

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NOTES TO EDITORS

A ‘Net Employment Outlook’ is calculated by subtracting those employers who plan to reduce staffing levels from those who plan to hire staff. A positive result indicates that more employers plan to increase rather than decrease staffing levels; a negative result reflects the opposite. [% increase - % decrease]

Commentary and full details on every sector and region can be found in the survey report at manpowergroup.co.uk/meos, or by calling the Press Office on 0207 404 5959/ manpower@brunswickgroup.com

For international comparisons and visual library with graphs, visit manpowergroup.com

¹ Office for National Statistics, UK labour market statistical bulletin, May 2017.

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/employmentandemployeetypes/datasets/employmentbycountryofbirthandnationalityemp06>

Commentary is based on seasonally adjusted data where available. Full survey results for each of the 42 countries and territories included in this quarter's survey, plus regional and global comparisons, can be found in the ManpowerGroup Press Room at www.manpowergroup.com/meos. In addition, all tables and graphs from the full report are available to be downloaded for use in publication or broadcast from the ManpowerGroup Web site at: <http://www.manpowergroup.com/press/meos.cfm>

Note that in Quarter 2 2008, the Survey adopted the TRAMO-SEATS model for seasonal adjustment of data. As a result, you may notice some seasonally adjusted data points change slightly from previous reports. This model is recommended by the Eurostat department of the European Union and the European Central Bank, and is widely used internationally.

About the Survey

The world leader in innovative workforce solutions, ManpowerGroup releases the Manpower Employment Outlook Survey quarterly to measure employers' intentions to increase or decrease the number of employees in their workforce during the next quarter. It is the longest running, most extensive, forward-looking employment survey in the world, polling nearly 59,000 employers in 42 countries and territories. The survey serves as a bellwether of labour market trends and activities and is regularly used to inform the Bank of England's Inflation Reports, as well as a regular data source for the European Commission, informing its EU Employment Situation and Social Outlook report the *Monthly Monitor*. ManpowerGroup's independent survey data is also sourced by financial analysts and economists around the world to help determine where labour markets are headed.

About ManpowerGroup

ManpowerGroup™ (NYSE: MAN) has been the world's workforce expert, creating innovative workforce solutions, for nearly 70 years. As workforce experts, we connect more than 600,000 men and women to meaningful work across a wide range of skills and industries every day. Through our ManpowerGroup family of brands – Manpower®, Experis™, Right Management® and ManpowerGroup™ Solutions – we help more than 400,000 clients in 80 countries and territories address their critical talent needs, providing comprehensive solutions to resource, manage and develop talent. In 2016, ManpowerGroup was named one of the World's Most Ethical Companies for the sixth consecutive year and one of Fortune's Most Admired Companies, confirming our position as the most trusted and admired brand in the industry. See how ManpowerGroup makes powering the world of work humanly possible: www.manpowergroup.com.