

RETAIL FACT SHEET – NORTHERN IRELAND

OVERVIEW AND PROSPECTS



Retail is one of the most diverse and exciting industries you could make a career in. It is Northern Ireland's largest private sector employer and employs around 83,000 people or 11% of the working population. It includes corner shops, railway station kiosks, market stalls and the major superstores, making a significant contribution to every local community and region.

Despite the recent economic downturn, the retail industry in Northern Ireland will need at least 20,000 new employees over the next five years to fill new jobs or replace existing workers. Job roles in sales and managerial positions dominate the sector but there is an increasing demand for corporate managers, associate professionals in buying, marketing and administrative staff. The majority of

occupations within the industry require a minimum of an NVQ Level 2 with management occupations requiring at least NVQ Level 3, degree or professional qualification.

OCCUPATIONS WITHIN THE INDUSTRY

	2007	2012	2017	Net requirement 2007-2017*
Sales Assistants	29,900	28,500	28,900	10,000
Directors/Chief Executives	10,200	11,800	13,400	7,000
Administrative/Office Supervisor	8,900	9,300	9,400	4,000
Purchasing Professionals/Buying/Marketing	4,900	5,600	6,300	3,000
Basic Administration	7,100	7,000	7,100	3,000
Retail Managers and Proprietors	2,700	2,700	2,700	1,000
Business Professionals/Financial	1,000	1,000	1,200	1,000
Secretarial and Related Jobs	2,800	2,600	2,300	1,000
Other Customer Service Occupations	2,500	2,800	3,200	1,000
Transport Drivers and Logistics	1,500	1,500	1,500	1,000
Beauticians and Related Jobs	1,800	2,200	1,800	1,000
Vehicle Engineers/Mechanics	2,100	2,100	1,800	1,000
Warehouse Assistant/Storeperson	1,900	1,900	1,900	1,000

Source: Working Futures 2007-2017, UK Commission for Employment and Skills

* Expansion jobs and replacement demand. Projection rounded to nearest thousand.

SKILLS AND ENTRY REQUIREMENTS

There are many routes into the retail industry. The skills and qualifications needed vary by occupation. Routes into retail include apprenticeships, NVQs, foundation degrees, professional qualifications and a retail based degree available at the University of Ulster, Coleraine. Unless entering a specific professional area within retail, employers will accept a variety of degrees providing a 2:1 grade has been achieved. Graduate courses may require time working in Great Britain and geographical flexibility is important when working for most large retailers. Average graduate retail salary is £22,500.

Further information on the skills and qualifications needed for a retail career can be found at www.skillsmartretail.com/careers or www.careersserviceni.com

CURRENT VACANCIES AND SKILL SHORTAGES¹

In Northern Ireland, 8% of retailers reported having at least one vacancy. This means there are around 1,600 stores in Northern Ireland with at least one vacancy. The majority of vacancies occur in sales and managerial occupations and some of these are difficult to fill. Low numbers of applicants with the required skills or motivation is often cited as the reason.

There are also 7% of retailers in Northern Ireland who report skills gaps. Across all sectors, customer handling and oral communication are the most widespread skills lacking in employees.

DID YOU KNOW THAT IN NORTHERN IRELAND...

- the average gross weekly pay for a sales assistant was £263 in 2008 compared with £463 for all full-time employees in the workforce
- the average gross weekly pay for a retail manager was £473 in 2008
- a full-time sales assistant worked an average of 39 hours per week in 2008
- retail is one of the few industries in Northern Ireland that employs more women than men (a ratio of 59:41)
- 55% of the retail workforce is full-time and 45% work part-time
- around 10% of all retail workers are self-employed
- over 30 training providers offer retail apprenticeships
- there are currently 650 students enrolled on Level 2 apprenticeship programmes
- there are plenty of opportunities to work for independent retailers. 51% of retailers in Belfast City centre are independent.

USEFUL LINKS

Careers Service NI	Provides an impartial all-age careers information, advice and guidance service: www.careersserviceni.com
Skillsmart Retail	The Sector Skill Council (SSC) for the UK retail industry: www.skillsmartretail.com
JobCentre Online	Contains vacancies currently notified to Jobs and Benefit offices: www.jobcentreonline.com
Eures	The European Mobility Portal: www.europa.eu.int/eures/home.jsp
Retail recruitment online	www.inretail.co.uk www.retailmoves.com www.retailcareers.co.uk

Information provided by Skillsmart Retail. Last updated January 2009. To check that this is the most up-to-date fact sheet go to www.careersserviceni.com

¹ NI Skills Monitoring Survey 2005, Department for Employment and Learning