SCALEUP INSTITUTE
NORTHERN IRELAND SCALEUP INDEX

SCALEUP NORTHERN IRELAND

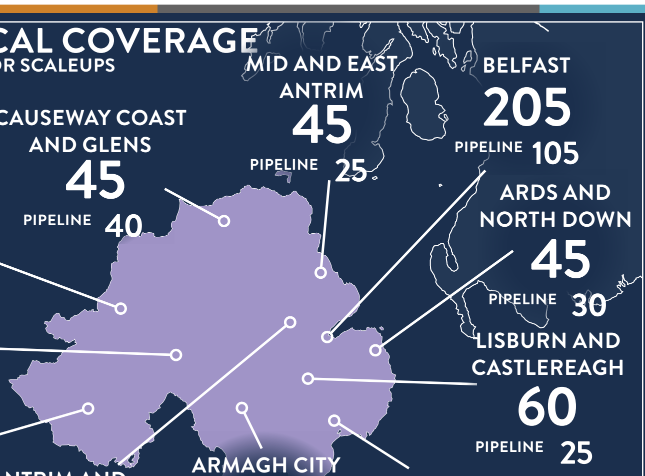
In 2025 this Northern Ireland ScaleUp Index reflects 790 scaleup and 465 scaling businesses generating £15bn for the Northern Irish economy, and employing more than 82k people. Of the 1,200 scaleups, the majority are growing over 30% year on year in either employment or turnover, and almost a quarter are growing by more than 50%. Furthermore, over 275 have broken through £10.2m in turnover or £5.1m in assets, attaining £127m in external investment. These companies are across all sectors and geographies, with wholesale and retail representing the largest sector. The biggest barriers highlighted by Northern Irish scaleup CEOs to their further growth are Access to Markets at home and abroad; Talent and Access to Finance: ScaleUp Northern Ireland wants to make sure that we continue to address these challenges and connect Northern Irish scaleups to the money, people and markets that they need to propel their global ambitions.

NORTHERN IRELAND SCALEUPS OVERALL NUMBERS - ONS DATA

	NO. OF SCALEUPS	NO. OF JOBS	TOTAL TURNOVER	AVERAGE TURNOVER
	790	57k	£10.7bn	£13.5m
SCALING PIPELINE	465	25.5k	£4.4bn	£9.4m

SCALEUP LOCAL COVERAGE

LOCAL DISTRIBUTION FOR SCALEUPS IN NORTHERN IRELAND



OVERALL SECTORAL CLUSTERS ACCORDING TO ONS DATA

ACROSS NORTHERN IRELAND KEY SECTORAL CLUSTERS ARE WHOLESALE AND RETAIL FOLLOWED BY HEALTH AND SOCIAL WORK

- 17.7% WHOLESALE AND RETAIL
- 13.3% HEALTH AND SOCIAL WORK
- 12% MANUFACTURING
- 11.4% CONSTRUCTION
- 10.8% ACCOM / FOOD
- 7.6% ADMIN / SUPPORT
- 7% PROF/ SCIENTIFIC & TECH
- 6.3% INFO & COMMS
- 4.4% TRANSPORT

Sources: ONS IDBR 2019-2022

NORTHERN IRISH VISIBLE SCALEUPS

Based on Companies House data this shows the number of scaling businesses breaking through the £10.2m t/o; £5.1m assets and / or 50 employees barrier in 2024.

NO. OF SCALEUPS	NO. OF JOBS	TOTAL TURNOVER	TOTAL INVESTMENT
275	47.8k	£5.4bn	£127.7m

UKRI Innovate UK

Innovate UK awarded 32 grants worth £7.1 million supporting their scaleup journey. These scaleups have raised a total investment of £45.8m a 6.4x multiplier effect of their grant funding.

VISIBLE SCALEUP CLUSTERS

ACROSS NORTHERN IRELAND, KEY SECTORAL CLUSTERS ARE BUSINESS AND PROFESSIONAL SERVICES AND INDUSTRIALS

- 36.7% WHOLESALE / RETAIL
- 34.1% CONSTRUCTION / PROPERTY
- 26.9% ADVANCED MANUFACTURING
- 16% HEALTH & SOCIAL WORK
- 14.9% PROFESSIONAL SERVICES
- 10.5% ENVIRONMENT & AGRICULTURE
- 9.8% TRANSPORT
- 8.7% CARE / WELLBEING SERVICES
- 8.0% RAW MATERIALS

49% of visible scaling businesses in Northern Ireland are in at least one or more Industrial Strategy sectors

Source: SUI analysis of data from Companies House, Dealroom, Beauhurst & Crunchbase

SCALEUP INSTITUTE · UKRI Innovate UK · BARCLAYS · BUY WOMEN BUILT · HSBC Innovation Banking · Sage · SuperScalers · LONDON STOCK EXCHANGE An LSEG Business · British Business Bank · BGF · CMIT · NatWest · UK Finance

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH

Invest Northern Ireland · ORMEAU LABS

SCALEUP INSTITUTE
NORTHERN IRELAND SCALEUP INDEX

TOP FUNDERS IN NORTHERN IRELAND

BY NUMBER OF FUNDRAISINGS FOR DEALS INTO VISIBLE SCALEUPS

Kernel Capital	11
Clarendon Fund Managers	9
Par Equity	5
Accelerated Digital Ventures	4
7Percent	3
BGF	3
Invest NI	3
Techstart Ventures	3
British Business Bank	2
Business Angel(s)	2
Cordovan Capital	2
Danske Bank	2
Kainos	2
Mobeus	2
Bloc Group	1
Broadlake Capital	1
First Capital Ventures	1
Foresight Group	1
Guinness Ventures	1
H2 Equity Partners	1
Ironbridge Capital Partners	1
QUBIS Ltd	1
Wharton Asset Management	1

TOP 4 ADVISORS BY NUMBER OF VISIBLE SCALEUPS ADVISED

TUGHANS

RSM

GRANT THORNTON (GT)

A&L GOODBODY

Source: SUI analysis of Beauhurst data

BARRIERS TO GROWTH FOR NORTHERN IRISH SCALEUPS

As identified, the following barriers to growth in the recent ScaleUp Institute Survey of over 51 scaleup CEOs located in Northern Ireland, across all the sectors, whose businesses generate £1.8bn and employ over 15.2k people.

THE KEY CHALLENGES FOR FUTURE GROWTH HOLDING BACK SCALEUPS IN NORTHERN IRELAND:

Access to markets in the UK / internationally	73%
Access to talent and leadership development	56%
Access to the right debt / equity finance	40%
Infrastructure & access to R&D facilities	35%
Access to tax breaks	25%

NORTHERN IRISH SCALEUPS WANT MORE OF

RELATIONSHIP MANAGEMENT AND IDENTIFICATION

5 in 10 would like a single point of contact to act as a relationship manager for them. Northern Irish scaleups are happy to be identified on a public record, with **6 in 10** stating this should be on an opt-in basis.

LOCAL RESOURCES TO HELP THEM SCALE:

Access to peer networks is the local external resource that scaleups in Northern Ireland are most keenly seeking.

- 5 in 10: Professional services
- 4 in 10: Universities; Banks / Financiers
- 3 in 10: NEDs & fractional execs; Peer Networks

SCALEUPS WOULD LIKE EASIER LOCAL ACCESS TO:

- 5 in 10: Programmes to expand internationally / export more
- 4 in 10: Innovate UK; Flexible management/ leadership development programmes / Introductions to potential investors; Advice on funding your business

Source: ScaleUp Institute Annual Scaleup Survey 2022-2024

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH

SCALEUP INSTITUTE
NORTHERN IRELAND SCALEUP INDEX

SCALEUP NORTHERN IRELAND

THE **TALENT, SKILLS AND LEADERSHIP** PERSPECTIVE

WORKFORCE SKILLS GAPS AND RECRUITMENT CHALLENGES (%)

AI / Cyber skills	40%
Research / Analytical / Scientific skills	37%
Manufacturing / Engineering	34%
Business and Admin / Finance	31%

0 5 10 15 20 25 30 35 40

KEY FUTURE SKILLS

MOST IMPORTANT SKILLS FOR THE FUTURE WORKFORCE

PEOPLE MANAGEMENT	58%
ADAPT TO NEW TECHNOLOGY	40%
CRITICAL THINKING	31%
JUDGEMENT AND DECISION MAKING	31%
RESILIENCE & FLEXIBILITY	31%
CREATIVITY	26%
SERVICE ORIENTATION / INITIATIVE	26%
ACTIVE LEARNING	24%
COMPLEX PROBLEM SOLVING	24%

42% NORTHERN IRISH SCALEUPS OFFER APPRENTICESHIP OPPORTUNITIES TO YOUNG PEOPLE

While skills development is an important role for educators, scaleup leaders want improvement in career guidance and how they can connect with young talent through encounters and work experience:

Employer encounters	50%
Enhanced Maths curriculum	43%
Interpersonal skills	38%
Careers advice	36%
Entrepreneurial education	36%
Accreditation digital skills	32%
Vocational courses	25%
Focus on Creativity	25%
Education on business funding/investment	23%

2 IN 10 SCALEUPS HAVE A BOARD

Board/senior management skills desired by Northern Irish scaleups

Sales / Business Development	56%
Innovation / product development	38%
HR / Talent / Culture Management	38%
Strategy development	33%
Brand building / marketing / communications	31%
Finance / Fundraising	25%
Compliance/Risk Management	15%

THE **MARKET** PERSPECTIVE

46% PRIMARILY SELL TO OTHER BUSINESSES OR GOVERNMENT (B2B)

54% SELL DIRECT TO CONSUMERS (B2C)

WE NEED TO BREAK DOWN **BARRIERS TO EXPORTING**

9 IN 10 CURRENTLY EXPORT

10 IN 10 LOOKING TO FUTURE EXPORT MARKETS

BARRIERS FOR SCALEUPS SELLING TO GOVERNMENT AND LARGE CORPORATES

- Complex procurement process
- Time taken to win a contract
- Having correct finance in place
- Finding out about opportunities to bid

KEY EXPORT MARKETS FOR SCALEUPS IN NORTHERN IRELAND

THE EU	88%
NORTH AMERICA	63%
AUSTRALASIA	38%
MIDDLE EAST	25%
OTHER PARTS OF ASIA	25%
AFRICA	19%
INDIAN SUBCONTINENT	13%
LATIN AMERICA	13%
CHINA	13%
OTHER PARTS OF EUROPE OUTSIDE EU	13%

What would help Northern Irish scaleups grow their exports?

- BETTER INTRODUCTIONS TO BUYERS IN OVERSEAS MARKETS BY THE TRADE DEPT
- GREATER BESPOKE MARKET INSIGHTS
- INTERNATIONAL TRADE HUBS CLOSE TO WHERE YOU ARE IN THE UK

WHAT WOULD HELP SCALEUPS

- ACCESS TO KEY DECISION MAKERS AND A DEDICATED ACCOUNT MANAGER
- DEDICATED APPORTIONMENT OF FUNDING TO WORK WITH SCALING BUSINESSES
- ACCESS TO ONLINE COLLABORATION PLATFORMS

Source: ScaleUp Institute Annual Scaleup Survey 2022-2024

SCALEUP INSTITUTE
NORTHERN IRELAND SCALEUP INDEX

SCALEUP NORTHERN IRELAND

THE FINANCE PERSPECTIVE

7 in 10
Have used or plan to use one of the tax schemes

6 in 10
Perceive most funding to be in London/South East

2 in 10
Scaleups have insufficient capital to meet growth ambitions

3 in 10
Use external finance

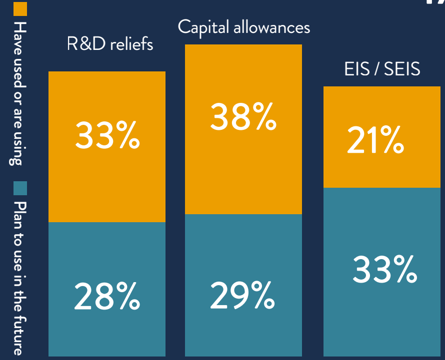
BARRIERS TO FINANCE

Barrier	%
Not the right time	50%
Unsure what to do	50%
Investor fit	30%
Short-term focus of investors	30%
Don't want to give up any control of the business	30%

£41.9M - £115.4M

GROWTH CAPITAL GAP IN NORTHERN IRELAND

TAX SCHEMES



Faster claim processing / settlement	45%
Commitment from Government to continue offering these schemes beyond current time periods	41%
Making schemes easier to understand/apply for	38%
Expanding the range of things we are able to claim for	36%

PLANS FOR INVESTMENT

Research and development	82%
Capital expenditure	56%
Changes to product / service design and/or offerings	46%
Acquisition of another business	46%

SCALEUPS ARE SEEKING SUPPORT TO ACCESS INVESTMENT

4 IN 10
- Increased regional presence of the British Business Bank with access to investors
- Access to investment managers at Innovate UK

3 IN 10
- Sector briefings and insights so that investors know more about your sector
- 'Meet the investor' and other events showcasing your business
- Regular investment briefings for businesses to inform you about latest investor
- Connections with schools, universities, colleges and technical institutions
- Relationship managers in local Investment Zones, responsible for making connections

2 IN 10
- Better access to finance mentors and peers who have raised funds before
- Relationship Managers at Investors
- A more structured referral process between investors and sector briefings

Source: ScaleUp Institute Annual Scaleup Survey 2022-2024

ScaleUp Institute · UKRI Innovate UK · Barclays · Buy Women Built · HSBC Innovation Banking · Sage · SuperScalers · London Stock Exchange An LSEG Business · British Business Bank · BGF · CMIT · NatWest · UK Finance

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH
Invest Northern Ireland · Ormeau Labs