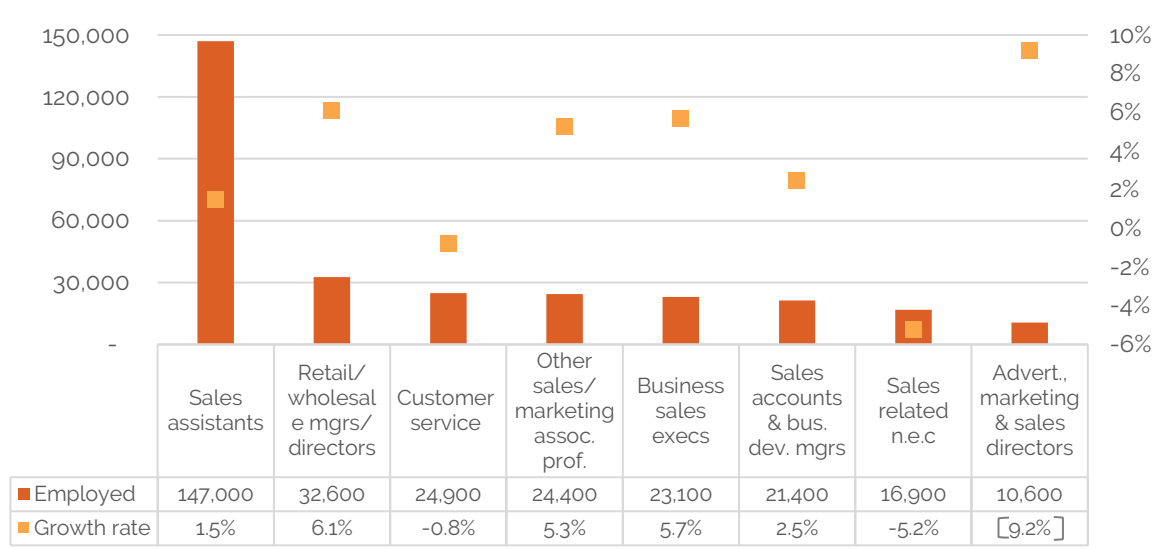


10.15 Sales, Marketing and Customer Service Occupations

Figure 10.15 Annual Average Employment (2023) & Annual Average Growth Rates (2018-2023)



Overall employment	300,800
Share of total workforce	11%
Main sectors of employment	71% - Wholesale & retail 6% - Industry 5% - ICT
Employment growth	+30,100 between 2018 and 2023 +2.1% on average annually (compared to +3.5% for total workforce)

2023	% Female Q4	% Full-time Q4	% Aged 55 years & over Q4	% Irish citizens Q4	% Third level graduates Q4	Number of new employment permits	Recruitment Agency Survey
Advertising, marketing & sales directors	...	97%	...	[86%]	[78%]	78	✓
Managers & directors in retail & wholesale	38%	91%	[24%]	82%	51%	15	
Business sales executives	[28%]	89%	[17%]	78%	62%	273	✓
Sales accounts & bus. dev. managers	[34%]	98%	...	80%	80%	230	✓
Other sales and marketing assoc. prof.	54%	88%	[18%]	85%	81%	463	✓
Sales assistants	63%	39%	11%	84%	19%	2	
Sales related n.e.c.	[43%]	75%	...	84%	[36%]		
Customer service	65%	79%	...	77%	54%	45	
Overall total	52%	64%	14%	83%	41%	1,106	

Source: SLMRU (SOLAS) analysis of CSO (LFS) data, DETE, and SLMRU Recruitment Agency Survey (RAS)
Numbers in square brackets should be treated with caution; an ellipsis (...) denotes numbers too small to report

Overall Outlook for these Occupations

Overall employment levels in this occupational group between 2022 and 2023 remained almost unchanged, with elevated levels of inflation and reduced consumer demand during this period likely to have been contributing factors, particularly for those employed in the wholesale and retail sector. The Central Bank forecasts an increased level of consumer spending in 2024 as real income improves which should have a positive effect on sales roles in the short-term at least.¹ Although the wholesale and retail sector accounted for the highest share of employment in these occupations (driven by the high volume of sales assistants employed in this group), issues with sourcing certain sales roles, as identified in the employment permits data, appear to relate to other sectors such as the ICT sector, which accounts for a far smaller share of employment. Sales skills feature strongly in Enterprise Ireland's Spotlight on Skills data spanning a range of skills from marketing, communication, negotiation, solving customers' problems and product/technical knowledge.

Occupation	Economic summary
Advertising, marketing & sales directors	This is a relatively small occupation with just over 10,000 persons employed in 2023; despite strong growth between 2018 and 2022, employment contracted (by 1,000) in the most recent year. There was a relatively high volume of online job adverts (Eurostat/CEDEFOP) for this occupation in 2023, primarily related to marketing/sales directors. Skills for Growth data identified issues recruiting digital marketing specialists (with knowledge of social media) with marketing, branding, digital advertising and ecommerce skills highlighted as in demand in EI's Spotlight on Skills data.
Managers & directors in retail & wholesale	Employment growth for this occupation was above average, although employment levels fell by 3,000 in 2023. Almost a quarter (24%) were aged 55 years and older. There was a relatively high share of online job adverts (Eurostat/CEDEFOP) for these roles. Future employment growth for this occupation will be dependent on consumer spending and changing patterns of shopping for goods (e.g. online shopping).
Business sales executives	Employment levels were steady between 2019 and 2021 but employment numbers have grown since, with an additional 6,000 persons employed between 2022 and 2023. New employment permits issued were mostly critical skills permits, with half relating to the ICT sector. Employers, via Skills for Growth and EI's Spotlight on Skills data, identified issues with recruiting those in technical sales with technical/engineering skills and knowledge (e.g. solar panel sales, manufacturing), with a demand also for skills in customer relationship management and being able to adapt to the customer type (i.e. managing an existing relationship vs attracting new customers). The extent to which the slowdown in hirings in the ICT sector, where particular issues have been identified, will alleviate recruitment issues is yet to be determined, particularly given the recent growth in employment.
Sales accounts & bus. dev. managers	Employment levels remained almost unchanged since 2021 resulting in a below average growth rate. A third of the new employment permits issued in 2023 related to roles in the ICT sector for a broad range of titles including business development managers. Difficult-to-fill vacancies in the Recruitment Agency Survey were for sales/marketing and lead category managers. EI's Spotlight on Skills identified strategic buyers (with project management) and sales account managers (with CRM skills) as being difficult to source particularly relating to the manufacturing sector. Although some issues with recruitment have been identified, the lack of employment growth in recent years does not point to an overall shortage for these roles at present.
Other sales & marketing assoc. professionals	Employment growth was above average for this occupation, having grown steadily between 2018 and 2021; employment levels have declined annually since (and by 3,000 in 2023). Online job adverts (Eurostat/CEDEFOP) were mainly for buyers and procurement officers. Approximately half of the new employment permits issued in 2023 were for the ICT sector (although the share in employment in this sector was small); roles included marketing executives, procurement and supply chain roles and account managers/strategists. Difficult-to-fill vacancies in the Recruitment Agency Survey related to procurement and supply chain roles. Skills identified in the Spotlight on Skills data included bid preparation, procurement, and tender writing skills.

¹ Central Bank of Ireland, Quarterly Bulletin, Q2 2024

Sales assistants	<p>The below average growth rate for sales assistants relates to a dip in employment levels in 2020 with the onset of COVID-19 restrictions; employment levels in 2022 had returned to pre-COVID levels and employment continued to grow in 2023. Recent job hires far exceeded any employment growth suggesting that job churn is a significant feature of this occupation and is likely to be the main cause of the high volume of vacancies for these roles (both Eurostat/CEDEFOP and DSP). Three fifths of employment was for part-time roles and almost half were aged 15-24 years, with students in full-time education likely to feature strongly in this role. Replacement demand is likely to remain strong for this occupation. Skills for Growth data indicated issues with recruitment of retail sales assistants with knowledge of specific manufacturing sectors and for specialist shops.</p>
Customer service occupations	<p>The below average growth rate for this occupation primarily related to a fall of 4,700 persons employed between 2022 and 2023. Despite the fall in employment in 2023, there was a relatively high share of recent job hires, indicating that job churn is a factor for this occupation. New employment permits issued in 2023 were mainly for roles in the ICT sector (e.g. RCO investigation specialist). The number of online job adverts (Eurostat/CEDEFOP) almost halved between 2022 and 2023; DSP job adverts were mainly for mystery shoppers and customer services agents. Spotlight on Skills data noted issues with recruiting persons with customer service skills (i.e. being able to interact effectively with customers).</p>
Sales related occupations n.e.c.	<p>Although employment grew steadily between 2018 and 2021, sharp falls in 2022 (by 9,200) and again in 2023 (by a more moderate 2,400) resulted in a negative employment growth rate. Skills for Growth data highlighted issues with recruiting technical sales representatives with product knowledge (including IT).</p>