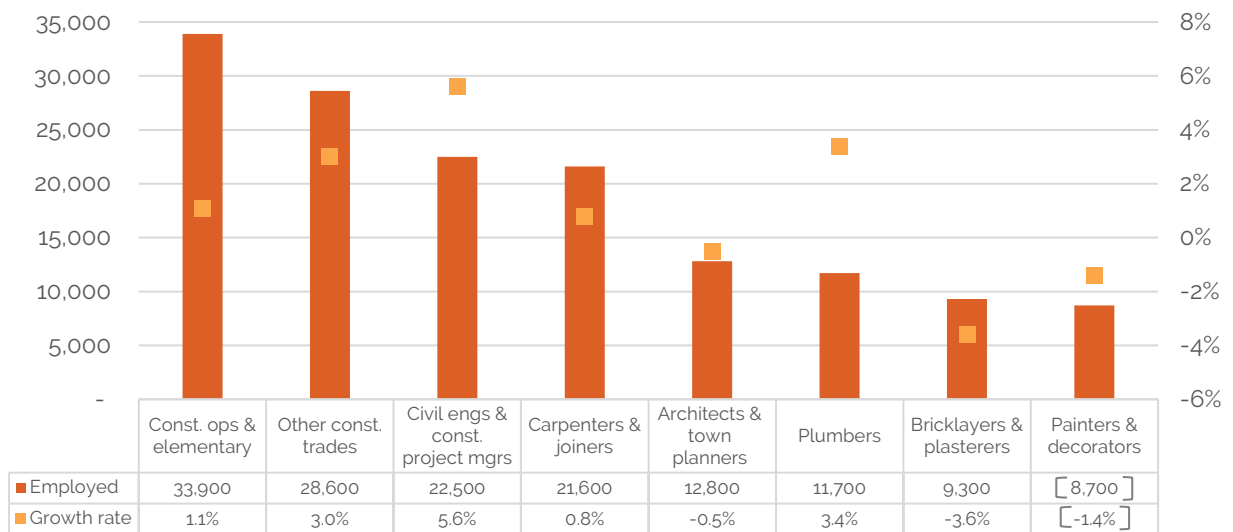


## 10.8 Construction Occupations

Figure 10.8 Annual Average Employment (2023) & Annual Average Growth Rates (2018-2023)



<b>Overall employment</b>	<b>154,500</b>
<b>Share of total workforce</b>	6.0%
<b>Main sectors of employment</b>	73% - Construction 11% - Professional activities [6%] - Industry
<b>Employment growth</b>	+12,200 between 2018 and 2023 +1.7% 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
Civil engineers & construction project mgrs	...	98%	[22%]	84%	77%	681	✓
Architects & town planners etc.	...	94%	...	84%	96%	136	✓
Construction related technicians	...	...	...	...	...	22	✓
Bricklayers & plasterers	...	[91%]	...	98%	...	84	
Plumbers	...	97%	...	96%	...	32	
Carpenters & joiners	...	96%	...	82%	...	195	✓
Painters & decorators	...	[92%]	...	...	...	46	
Other construction trades	...	94%	27%	76%	...	58	✓
Construction operatives & elementary	...	88%	[15%]	75%	...	14	✓
<b>Overall total</b>	<b>[5%]</b>	<b>93%</b>	<b>20%</b>	<b>81%</b>	<b>33%</b>	<b>1,268</b>	

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  
Construction related technicians are included in overall total but numbers are too small to report.

## Overall Outlook for these Occupations

Employment growth was below average in construction-related occupations with an increase of just 12,000 persons employed between 2018 and 2023. Employment growth slowed or declined across these occupations during the COVID-19 pandemic, with many roles only seeing employment numbers returning to pre-COVID-19 levels in 2022. Almost all persons employed were male with the majority of those employed in full-time roles. There was a relatively high number of jobseekers registered with the DSP at the end of December 2023 who stated that their previous occupation was in construction trades or other construction-related occupations; although it was not possible to disaggregate across trades or to determine if they were qualified tradespersons, it does indicate some potential additional supply for these roles. The number of employment permits issued in 2023 declined slightly compared to 2022, although remained higher than in 2021 (as a number of construction occupations were removed from the ineligible list for employment permits during this time).

The demand and supply of construction related skills is affected by a range of factors. Government plans alone are likely to see demand increasing in order to deliver on housing and climate action targets<sup>1</sup> and both the Construction Industry Federation<sup>2</sup> and DPENDR<sup>3</sup> highlight the importance of the supply of skills and labour needed to meet these targets. The demand for construction-related skills will also be impacted by the potential demands of non-residential building as well as Government infrastructure projects (e.g. Project Ireland 2040). In addition, the nature of the skills mix required for construction-related jobs is changing: modern methods of construction may require less on-site labour and may go some way to mitigate issues with supply of skills by relying more on off-site manufacturing processes.<sup>4</sup> These new methods, along with the transition to a zero-carbon economy, will have significant implications for construction-related skills, with a changing skills mix for a range of existing occupations (e.g. civil engineers, plumbers, roofers, glaziers, etc) likely to require considerable levels of upskilling/reskilling.

The recent SLMRU report on occupational gender segregation noted that construction jobs have a particularly high share of males employed; increasing flexibility in the workplace will be required to attract and retain women and increase the supply of skills for these roles, as also emphasised in DFHERIS' Careers in Construction Action Plan.<sup>5</sup>

Occupation	Economic summary
Civil engineers & construction project managers  <b>Skills shortage: Civil engineers &amp; construction project managers</b>	Employment growth was above average for this occupation with annual increases since 2020, and growing by 2,400 persons employed since 2022. The number of employment permits issued grew on the previous year, with civil/site/structural engineers and construction project managers accounting for most of the permits issued. Online job adverts (Eurostat/CEDEFOP) related mainly to civil engineers; DSP adverts were smaller in quantity but included civil, site and project engineers. Data from the Recruitment Agency Survey, Skills for Growth and Spotlight on Skills noted issues with filling vacancies for civil/site engineers and/or construction project managers; skills in demand associated with these vacancies included project management, problem solving and critical thinking skills. The number of awards for civil and building engineering subjects has been increasing in recent years, with over 1,000 awards at levels 8-10 in 2022; of these, 266 awards were for civil engineering, the highest number in several years, and a third more than in 2018 (although the numbers have fluctuated in the intervening years). Although shortages are arising for both roles, civil engineers account for over half of employment in this occupation.

<sup>1</sup> A 2022 DFHERIS report estimates that 50,000 new entrants will be required across all skill levels over the period 2023-2030 to deliver Government targets for housing and retrofitting alone (gov.ie - Report on the Analysis of Skills for Residential Construction & Retrofitting, 2023 to 2030 (www.gov.ie))

<sup>2</sup> Turnover and employment continued to increase in the construction sector - CIF Construction Outlook Survey, Quarter 2 2024 - Construction Industry Federation

<sup>3</sup> gov - Build 2024 - Construction Sector Performance and Capacity (www.gov.ie)

<sup>4</sup> <https://skillsireland.ie/all-publications/2024/skills-for-modern-methods-of-construction.html>

<sup>5</sup> gov - Careers in Construction: Action Plan (www.gov.ie)

<p>Architects &amp; town planners, architectural technologists, &amp; surveyors</p> <p><b>Skills shortage: Quantity surveyors</b></p>	<p>This occupation had a negative annual average employment growth rate over the five-year period, with employment declining annually since 2021; the numbers employed across the roles within this group are too small to determine which are particularly contributing to the decline. The number of job adverts were also relatively small (mainly for architects, town planners and quantity surveyors). Despite this, our other data sources point to issues with attracting suitably qualified persons for these roles. Employment permits issued in 2023 were mainly for quantity surveyors and architectural technologists. The Recruitment Agency Survey identified issues with sourcing quantity surveyors while the Skills for Growth data identified issues with sourcing experienced (2-5 years) façade designers, quantity surveyors and architects with knowledge of codes, regulations and fire safety, as well as experience with tender documents.</p> <p>There were over 750 architecture related awards in 2022; of these, 155 awards were made to learners on RIAI accredited programmes (i.e. qualified architects), which fell slightly from nearly 170 awards in 2021, but was 44% higher than in 2018. There were 288 awards in quantity surveying at levels 8, considerably higher than the 144 awards in 2018. Demand for these skills is likely to continue with shortages persisting for quantity surveyors (albeit small in number given the small number employed).</p>
<p>Construction related technicians</p> <p><b>Shortage: Inconclusive</b></p>	<p>Numbers were too small to report for these roles but there was a relatively high level of jobs advertised online via the Eurostat/CEDEFOP database (mainly for building and civil engineering technicians), with vacancies for CAD and BIM technicians notified through the DSP Jobs Ireland. In addition, BIM technicians were mentioned in both the Recruitment Agency Survey and Skills for Growth data as difficult to source, with CAD technicians also highlighted in the Skills for Growth data for roles in both construction and manufacturing. In a review of employment permits in December 2023, BIM co-ordinators/technicians were added to the critical skills list.</p>
<p>Bricklayers &amp; plasterers</p>	<p>Employment levels for bricklayers and plasterers have been declining annually since 2021 with numbers employed in 2023 below pre-COVID-19 levels; the numbers employed are too small to determine if the decline is related to one role more than the other. The number of employment permits issued declined between 2022 and 2023, particularly related to a fall in the number issued for plasterers. The number of online job adverts (Eurostat/CEDEFOP) was small, while DSP Jobs Ireland vacancy notifications were for plasterers, stonemasons and bricklayers. The demand for both bricklayers and plasterers for housing is expected to decline in the coming years (see DFHERIS report); apartments account for an increasing share of housing stock and have fewer requirements for bricklayers due to the use of pre-cast concrete and modern methods of construction (MMC) where much of this work is carried out off-site. While MMC and offsite construction are likely to further dampen the demand for bricklayers and plasterers, retrofit activities are likely to see the need for reskilling and upskilling (e.g. heritage retrofitting, wall retrofit and external wall insulation techniques) for some of those currently employed in this occupation.</p>
<p>Plumbers</p> <p><b>Potential future skills shortage: Plumbers</b></p>	<p>Employment growth for plumbers was in line with the national average with approximately an additional 1,000 persons employed annually since 2020 (returning to 2019 levels). New employment permits issued related to both plumbers and plumbing, heating and ventilation engineers. The number of craft awards for plumbers has been increasing annually in recent years with 384 awards in 2023; the increased number of new apprenticeship registrations suggests that output will continue to be strong in the short-to medium term. While demand remains strong, the shortage of plumbers appears to have been alleviated. However, any acceleration of retrofitting activities will result in a significant increase in demand for these roles as plumbers will have an integral role in the installation of sustainable heat pumps. In addition, upskilling/reskilling of employed plumbers will be key in the coming years to ensure they are in a position to adapt to new technologies (e.g. heat pumps, new ventilation systems, wastewater drain heat recovery) and working in areas linked to alternative renewable energy sources (e.g. the shift away from traditional fossil fuel boilers towards the installation of heat pumps).</p>
<p>Carpenters &amp; joiners</p> <p><b>Potential future skills shortage: Carpenters</b></p>	<p>Although employment levels have been increasing for carpenters and joiners since 2021, they have not fully recovered to pre-COVID-19 levels. Despite this, there was a relatively high share of vacancies advertised on JobsIreland.ie for carpenters (including shuttering) with an increase in the number of new employment permits issued in 2023 compared to the previous year (primarily for shuttering carpenters). The number of new craft awards for carpenters has been increasing annually with 314 awards in 2023; apprenticeship registrations were also higher in 2023 than pre-COVID-19. As such, there are indications that with the increased supply, issues with recruitment have eased. The DFHERIS report suggests that developments in off-site construction manufacturing may</p>

	dampen demand for carpenters somewhat, although reaching the Government target of 50,000 new homes annually until 2030 will likely see increased demand for carpenters as activity levels increase. For some carpenters, reskilling and upskilling may be required to meet passive housing construction/retrofitting requirements (e.g. installing air-tight, energy efficient timber frame windows and thermal bridging reduction).
Painters & decorators	The numbers employed as painters and decorators in 2023 remained below pre-COVID-19 levels. There were some employment permits issued for these roles and vacancy notifications related to both residential and commercial painters. The supply of skills from the education and training system is small although a craft award is not always a requirement for this role. The future demand for painters will be mostly associated with home repair and maintenance activity, although there may be increased demand associated with retrofitting and the potential increase in house building activity. Currently, however, the data does not suggest there are any issues for this occupation.
Other construction trades (e.g. construction supervisors, floorers, glaziers, roofers)	This occupation had the largest absolute increase in employment since 2022 across construction occupations (+3,200 persons). Over a quarter of persons employed were aged 55 years and older which may lead to increased demand in future years to replace those leaving the occupation. Online job adverts (Eurostat/CEDEFOP) were primarily for supervisors, other trades and steel erectors and DSP Jobs Ireland vacancy notifications included forepersons, tilers and glaziers. Employment permits issued in 2023 were across a number of roles including tilers, steel fixers, forepersons, roofers, and floorers. Skills for Growth data indicated issues with sourcing roofers with carpentry skills for solar panel installation. Increased offsite construction of roofs is likely to have knock-on effects for demand for these skills although this may be offset by increased demand for roofers and glaziers for retrofitting activities (see DFHERIS report).
Construction operatives & elementary  <b>Shortage: Inconclusive</b>	Employment growth for this occupation was below average with only marginal annual changes over the five-year period. There was a high share of recent job hires for these roles indicating that many of the roles may be transitory in nature. Over a third held at most lower secondary education, far exceeding the national average. A quarter of those employed were non-Irish citizens, also above the national average. Scaffolders featured strongly in the online job adverts (Eurostat/CEDEFOP) and also in the DSP data along with floor and wall cladding installers and groundworkers. The small number of employment permits issued in 2023 were mainly for scaffolders. The first awards made to learners on the new scaffolding apprenticeship programme were made in 2024 with 27 QQI awards made at NFQ level 5. Demand for scaffolders appeared strong but the numbers employed are too small to determine if supply from the education/training system is sufficient to meet demand.