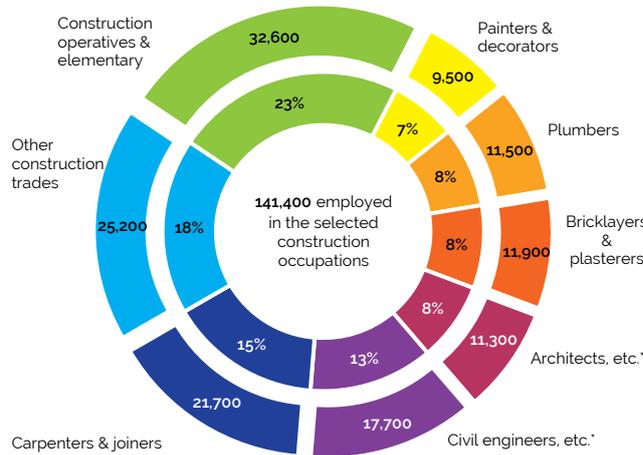


## 9.8 Construction Occupations

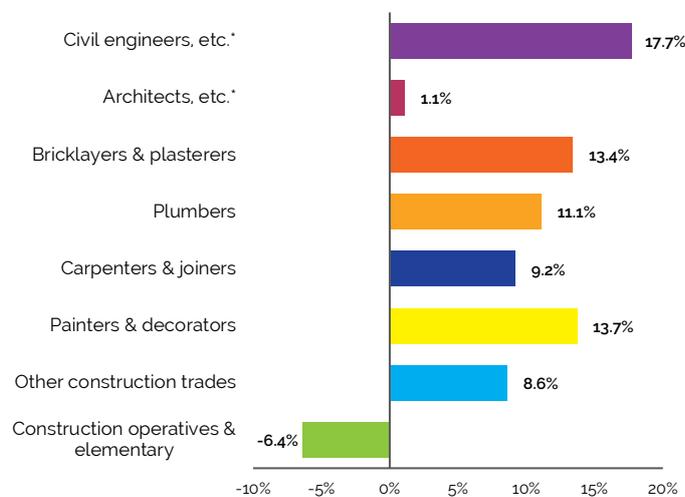
Overall employment: Approximately 141,000 persons (95% male) were employed in the selected construction occupations, representing 6% of the national workforce.

- **Sector:** 73% of overall employment was concentrated in the construction sector; a further 14% were employed in industry and professional activities combined
- **Employment growth (5-year):** Between 2014 and 2019, overall employment increased by 29,000 (4.6% on average annually compared to 3.2% nationally). The strongest rate of employment growth was observed for civil engineers, etc. (17.7%) during the period
- **Age:** The 25-54 age group accounted for the majority of persons employed, at 73%. The share of employees aged 55 and over was in line with the national average of 19%
- **Education:** The share of persons employed in the selected construction occupations who had attained higher secondary/FET qualifications was 51%, above the national average share of 38%. Those who had attained third level qualifications (26%) was well below the national average share (48%)
- **Full-time/part-time:** Over 92% of construction workers were in full-time employment
- **Nationality:** The share of non-Irish workers was slightly below the national average of 17%, while 85% of workers were Irish nationals.

Numbers employed, 2019 (annual average)



Average growth rates (%) 2014-2019



↑ Between 2014 and 2019, overall employment increased by 29,000 (4.6% on average annually compared to 3.2% nationally).

Source: SLMRU (SOLAS) analysis of CSO data

\*See detailed occupation description in table below

## Overall Outlook for these Occupations

Employment has grown strongly in recent years, although it slowed in the year since 2018. The forthcoming EGFSN report on the built environment<sup>24</sup> does not anticipate significant expansion in terms of numbers employed in the sector by 2030, although the nature of the tasks associated with construction occupations is likely to undergo substantial change, driven by both new technologies/materials and a demand for green construction and climate change mitigation.

The closure of construction sites as a result of COVID-19 had a significant impact on employment for these occupations. While many employed in the construction sector returned to work as restrictions eased, a significant number continued to receive income support payments. As such, employment for construction occupations in 2020 (annual average) is forecast to be 11% less than in 2019, representing 15,700 persons. Social distancing requirements are likely to have a knock-on effect on productivity while uncertainty in relation to finance and demand for services are all likely to have an impact on employment numbers in the coming months. Working in close proximity to others was highest for those in skilled trades and operative roles, and lowest for those in professional roles.

Occupation	Economic summary
Civil engineers & construction project managers	Although employment grew strongly over the five-year period, this may relate to changes that occurred on the introduction of the new Labour Force Survey in 2017; employment numbers remained relatively unchanged between 2018 and 2019. Demand for this occupation was evident in 2019, with many new employment permits issued and frequent mentions in the vacancy data analysis. The number of civil/structural engineering awards at third level had been declining in recent years. However, the decline appears to have halted, and may even have reversed with a slight increase in the number of graduates in 2018 compared to 2017. The impact of COVID-19 is likely to have been less severe than those in the construction sector involved in skilled trades and operative occupations.
Architects & town planners, architectural technologists, & surveyors	Employment growth was below the five-year national average, with a decline occurring between 2018 and 2019. The supply from the education and training system had been declining in recent years, although there have been increases in the number of awards for both architects and quantity surveyors between 2017 and 2018. Similar to civil engineers, the impact of COVID-19 on employment numbers is expected to have been less significant than the more labour-intensive roles.
Bricklayers & plasterers	The high five-year employment growth in this occupation may relate to changes that occurred on the introduction of the new Labour Force Survey in 2017; employment levels remained relatively unchanged between 2018 and 2019. Although currently eligible for employment permits, uptake for bricklayers and plasterers was small (less than 10) in 2019. New apprenticeship registrations for these two occupations have seen strong increases since 2014, albeit from a small base. The shift away from physical labour in this sector is expected to continue, and this will affect employment levels. The impact of COVID-19 is likely to have been significant for these occupations with the closure of construction sites; reopening of sites, in particular those in the residential sector as outlined in Project Ireland 2040, should see a certain level of recovery for these occupations.
Plumbers	Employment numbers had been growing for this occupation over the last five years. New apprenticeship registrations have almost doubled in the period since 2014, to 628 in 2019. Although technological change, particularly in relation to renewable energy, will see upskilling/reskilling requirements for plumbers, this may not result in significant numbers of new jobs. The closure of construction sites as a result of COVID-19 is likely to have had a significant impact for these occupations, although demand for services may still have been required for essential works during the lockdown, both in residential and business properties.
Carpenters & joiners	Employment growth over the last five years has been strong for this occupation. Over 100 new employment permits were issued in 2019 (primarily related to shuttering carpenters). New apprenticeship registrations have more than tripled since 2014, standing at 597 in 2019. While the impact of COVID-19 may have been significant for this occupation, a full recovery in employment numbers is expected in line with a return to full activity in the construction sector.

<sup>24</sup> Building Future Skills; The Demand for Skills in Ireland's Built Environment Sector to 2030, EGFSN 2020

Painters & decorators	The high five-year employment growth in this occupation may relate to changes that occurred on the introduction of the new Labour Force Survey in 2017; employment levels remained relatively unchanged between 2018 and 2019. New apprenticeship registration numbers are small for this occupation (31 in 2019). Although potentially impacted by the COVID-19 restrictions, demand for this occupation may have continued in certain areas as business owners undertook remodelling work during this time.
Other construction trades	Although the five-year employment growth was strong, employment levels have been unchanged since 2017. These occupations would have been strongly impacted by the closure of construction sites as a result of COVID-19 restrictions. Assuming full commercial construction activity resumes, demand for glaziers, steel erectors, roofers and tilers is expected to be sustained.
Construction operatives & elementary	The sharp fall in employment numbers in this occupation over the last five years may relate to changes that occurred on the introduction of the new Labour Force Survey in 2017; employment levels remained relatively unchanged between 2018 and 2019. A high number of recent job hires without any employment growth indicates that job churn is an issue for these occupations. The impact of COVID-19 restrictions is likely to have been severe for this occupation with the closure of construction sites. Future demand for these occupations will be impacted in part by the Government's infrastructure plans such as the National Broadband Plan and the Water Supply Project.

*\*For detailed table see Appendix A*