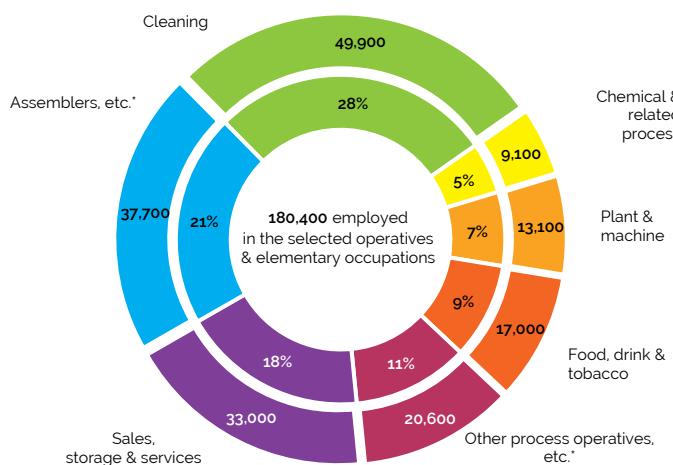


9.16 Operatives & Elementary Occupations n.e.c.

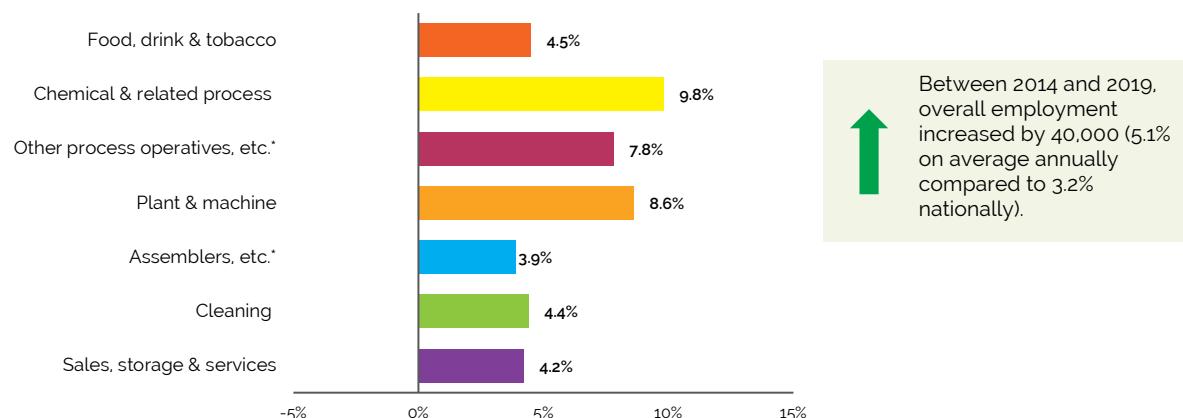
Overall employment: Approximately 180,000 persons (63% male) were employed in the selected operatives & elementary occupations n.e.c., representing 7.7% of the national workforce.

- **Sector:** 47% of overall employment was concentrated in industry, with the administrative services and wholesale/retail sector combined accounting for a further 27%
- **Employment growth (5-year):** Between 2014 and 2019, overall employment increased by 40,000 (5.1% on average annually compared to 3.2% nationally); the strongest rate of employment growth was observed for chemical & related process occupations (9.8%) during the period
- **Age:** The 25-54-year age group accounted for the majority of persons employed, at 74%; the share of employees aged 55 years and over was 16%, below the national average of 19%
- **Education:** The share of persons employed in the selected operatives & elementary occupations n.e.c. who had attained higher secondary/FET qualifications was 54%, well above the national average share of 38%; over a fifth of persons had a lower secondary education qualification or less
- **Full-time/part-time:** Over 76% of operatives & elementary occupations n.e.c. workers were in full-time employment
- **Nationality:** The share of non-Irish workers was well above the national average of 17%, while 71% of workers were Irish nationals.

Numbers employed, 2019 (annual average)



Average growth rates (%) 2014-2019



Source: SLMRU (SOLAS) analysis of CSO data

*See detailed occupation description in table below

Overall Outlook for these Occupations

Employment for the selected operative and elementary roles grew above the national average over the five-year period. As a result of COVID-19, a decline in employment of 11%, or 20,000 persons, is forecast across these operative and elementary roles on average in 2020 when compared with 2019. This decline is driven by expected falls in employment in industry (impacting occupations such as process operatives and assemblers) and the administrative services sector (relating to a fall in demand for cleaners). Many of these roles are considered at high risk of automation; therefore, a return to employment levels seen in 2019 is not expected. The availability of the future supply of skills may be an issue for some occupations, such as food processing operatives, while travel restrictions remain in place.

Occupation	Economic summary
Food, drink & tobacco	Employment growth was above the five-year national average. At 41%, this occupation had a higher share of non-Irish persons employed than the national share. Over 600 new employment permits were issued for this occupation in 2019 (particularly meat processing operatives), signalling difficulties in finding suitable candidates in the Irish labour market. This occupation has been significantly impacted by COVID-19, with some temporary closures and changes to work practices to comply with social distancing. Continuing to source new candidates may be challenging due to international travel restrictions.
Chemical & related process	Employment growth was strong for this occupation over the five-year period. However, these workers have been identified as being at high risk of automation. The impact of COVID-19 for this occupation is likely to have depended on the company product, with those in pharma-related areas likely to continue to be in high demand.
Other process operatives & process plant occupations (e.g. packers, bottlers and elementary process plant ops.)	Employment growth was strong for this occupation over the five-year period. At 32%, this occupation had a higher share of non-Irish persons employed than the national share. These workers, which include packers and bottlers, have been identified as being at high risk of automation. While this occupation is likely to have been affected by COVID-19, the nature of the impact is as yet uncertain and very much dependent on the area of manufacturing employment.
Plant & machine operatives (e.g. quarry workers, energy and sewerage plant operatives)	There was high employment growth for this occupation over the five-year period, particularly between 2018 and 2019. Both the high automation risk associated with these jobs and the impact of COVID-19 indicate that such high growth is unlikely to be sustained.
Assemblers & routine operatives	Employment growth was slightly above the national average for the five-year period. Both the high automation risk associated with these jobs and the impact of COVID-19 indicate that this growth is unlikely to be sustained.
Cleaning	Employment growth was above the five-year national average. Over half (54%) of those employed as cleaners were working part-time and over two thirds (69%) were female. The impact of COVID-19 is likely to have been severe for this occupation; a partial recovery may have occurred as the economy re-opened, particularly with stricter hygiene protocols, although a full recovery in employment numbers is unlikely as long as businesses continue to operate remotely.
Sales, storage & services	Employment growth was above the five-year national average. Recent job hires in 2019 outweighed employment growth indicating that job churn is an issue for this occupation. Both the high automation risk associated with these jobs and the impact of COVID-19, particularly in the wholesale/retail sector where the majority were employed, indicate that employment growth is unlikely to continue.

*For detailed table see Appendix A