

# Workforce Mobility and Skills in the UK Construction Sector 2022

Northern Ireland Report - May 2023



Study prepared by BMG Research from a commission by CITB.

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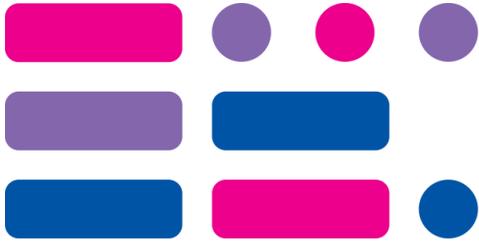
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Author: BMG Research



BMG

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## Executive summary

CITB commissioned BMG Research to undertake the 2022 Construction Workforce Mobility Survey, which builds on previous surveys conducted in 2018/19, 2015, 2012, 2007, and 2005. Face-to-face interviews were conducted with 3,005 construction workers undertaking manual roles on sites across the UK and 226 interviews were conducted with construction workers in Northern Ireland.

### Profile of the sample

All but less than half a percent of construction workers in Northern Ireland are male. Three in ten (30%) are aged under 35, which is a lower proportion than the general UK 16-64 years' workforce as a whole (36%), and much lower than the UK average<sup>1</sup> in the survey (45%). One in twelve (8%) are aged 16 to 19, which is similar to the UK average (6%). One in eight (12%) construction workers are aged 60 or over, compared to a lower UK average (6%).

Overall, just 1% of the Northern Ireland construction workforce represents an ethnic minority group, compared to a slightly higher incidence of 4% in the Northern Ireland 16-64 years' population as a whole. This compares to the UK survey average of 5%, which in turn compares to the general UK 16-64 years' population of 14%. On this basis the gap between the incidence of residents from ethnic minority groups and the extent to which this is represented within the construction worker population is smaller compared to other regions.

Just around one in twenty construction workers in Northern Ireland (6%) originate from another country (mainly the Republic of Ireland) as compared to a UK average of 17%.

In line with 2018/19, the majority of Northern Ireland construction workers have lived in the UK all of their life (92% compared to 90% in 2018/19). Again, as was the case in 2018/19, this is significantly higher than the UK average of 80%. Just 2% have lived in the UK less than five years.

However, uniquely in Northern Ireland, nearly half of workers hold a passport for another country (48%), and this has increased since 2018/19 (30%). Most were born in the UK (in Northern Ireland) but hold dual citizenship of the UK and the Republic of Ireland. Of those that were not born in the UK, two-thirds hold dual citizenship (67%).

By trade/occupation, the highest proportion of the Northern Ireland sample is accounted for by carpenters/joiners (14%), labourers/general operatives (13%), bricklayers (13%), site managers (12%) and plant/machine operatives (12%).

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<sup>1</sup> Unless otherwise stated, the term 'UK average' used throughout this report is the average for the UK construction workforce as estimated by this survey.

Two-fifths (40%) of all those interviewed in Northern Ireland perform a supervisory or management role on their site, around twice that of 2018/19 (21%) and 2015 (20%), and higher than the UK average (27%).

More than half (55%) of construction workers in Northern Ireland are self-employed, an increase on 2018/19 (46%) and 2015 (33%), and higher than the national average of 42%. There has been a corresponding decrease in the proportion who report being directly employed, from 52% in 2018/19 to 45% in 2022, which is just below the national average of 48%. None report working for an employment agency, compared to just 1% in 2018/19 and significantly lower than the UK average (9%).

More than two-fifths of construction workers in Northern Ireland (43%) are employed on a temporary, rather than a permanent basis (57%), a much higher proportion than in 2018/19 (10% and 88% respectively) and compared to the UK average (29%).

Construction workers in Northern Ireland, as across the UK as a whole, are most likely to report that they work between 40 and 49 hours per week (70%, compared to a UK average of 59%), while 5% work more than 50 hours a week, down on 2018/19 (9%), and lower than the UK average in 2022 (19%).

## Work history

### Time in the sector

More than half (58%) of all construction workers in Northern Ireland have worked in the construction industry for over 20 years, which is higher than the UK average (30%). Three-quarters (74%) have worked in the industry for at least 10 years, in line with the 2018/19 (71%).

More than three-quarters of Northern Ireland construction workers have worked pretty much continuously in the industry (78%, as in 2018/19), and Northern Ireland is well above the UK average in this respect (61%). The proportion who has joined construction from another sector has increased, from 6% in 2018/19 to 22% in the latest survey.

### Previous non-construction jobs

Amongst the 22% of construction workers in Northern Ireland who worked in another sector before starting work in construction, the most common sectors in which construction workers had started their careers were wholesale and retail trade (18%) and agriculture (14%). There has been a decline in those who started in manufacturing and moved to construction since 2015 (from 23% in 2015 to 20% in 2018/19 to 6% in 2022).

In terms of the job roles that respondents have held in other sectors, the highest proportions were in skilled trades occupations (37%), elementary administration and service occupations (20%), and process, plant and machine operatives (12%).

### Occupational switching within the construction sector

Overall, more than half (54%) of all construction workers in Northern Ireland have worked in more than one construction trade or occupation whilst working in the construction industry, a higher proportion than in 2018/19 (40%) and 2015 (39%), and higher than the UK average (35%). Amongst this group, 20% had worked in 1 previous role, 56% had worked in 2 previous roles, 15% had worked in 3 roles/occupations and 10% had worked in 4 roles/occupations.

Workers are most likely to have previously worked as a labourer/general operative (33%), while only slightly fewer (29%) had previously worked as a carpenter/joiner.

Most (97%) construction workers in Northern Ireland would like to carry on in the same trade or occupation, higher than the 2018/19 (87%) and the UK average (80%). Just 2% would like to change their trade/occupation, fewer than in 2018/19 (5%) and higher than the UK average in 2022 (7%). The remainder would like to leave construction (1%).

### Qualifications and skills

#### Skills cards/certificates

Similarly to 2018/19, 97% of all construction workers in Northern Ireland report holding a skill card or certificate (e.g. CSCS or CSR). This is slightly higher than the UK average (93%).

In terms of the type of skill card or certificate held by construction workers in Northern Ireland, the CSR (Construction Skills Register (NI)) is the most commonly held (96%), to a greater extent than 2018/19 (85%) and 2015 (70%). Around one in ten (9%) hold the CSCS (Construction Skills Certification Scheme (GB)), broadly in line with 2018/19 (7%), and a similar proportion (8%) hold the CPCS (Construction Plant Competence Scheme), twice as many as in 2018/19 (4%). Just 1% hold the CISRS (Construction Industry Scaffolders Record Scheme), in line with 2018/19 (2%).

#### Construction-specific qualifications

Within Northern Ireland, amongst those participating in the 2022 survey, very few held construction-related qualifications before starting work in the sector, and furthermore very few have gained these while working in construction.

### Current study for qualifications

Just 1% of all construction workers in Northern Ireland are currently working towards formal qualifications relevant to the construction industry (excluding supervisory or managerial qualifications). This is much lower than the UK average (13%), and compares with 12% in 2018/19 and 7% in 2015.

### Supervisory/managerial training

Amongst those who do not currently perform supervisory/management roles and have not had this role before, 28% want to become a supervisor or manager in the future, more than the 23% who did so in 2018/19, and one in twenty (6%) previously held the role and want to return to that status (more than the 3% in 2018/19). Three in five (59%) are certain that they do not want to, and the remaining 7% are unsure. Workers in Northern Ireland are keener to give it these roles a try than their counterparts across the UK (17% UK-wide), but as likely to reject the idea.

One in five (21%) of all construction workers in Northern Ireland have received formal training designed to improve managerial or supervisory knowledge or skills, similar to the 19% who had in 2018/19, and somewhat lower than the UK average of 33%. Among those who have or have had some form of supervisory or management responsibilities, nearly half (47%) have received formal training, fewer than in 2018/19 (61%) and 2015 (59%), and compared to the UK average (80%).

In terms of the types of supervisory/managerial training undertaken, Site Safety Supervisors Courses (52%), Supervisory Management Training (40%), SMSTS (Site Manager Safety Training Scheme) (29%) are most frequently mentioned by those who have undertaken any training, followed by CIOB Site Supervisor training (21%). In-house training was the most frequently mentioned in 2018/19, but this year was much less common (2%, compared to 45%).

### Basic skill needs

Overall, 19% of construction workers in Northern Ireland believe they would benefit from some form of training in basic skills (compared to 10% in 2018/19, 17% in 2015 and 16% in 2012). This is a similar proportion to the UK average (19%), which has seen an increase since 2018/19 (11%).

### Overall skill levels

The vast majority of construction workers in Northern Ireland have a skills card/certificate, but few had a construction-related qualification or were working towards a qualification at the point of interview: only 3% of those interviewed had neither a skills card/certificate or construction qualification.

## Geographic mobility

### Work history in the region/nation

All workers were asked what made them decide to work in the region/nation that they are currently working in. There is a different pattern of results in this respect compared to across the UK overall, with the vast majority in Northern Ireland stating that they grew up there/always lived there (92%, compared to a UK average of 46%), and no other reason is anywhere near as significant amongst those interviewed.

Approaching two-fifths (38%) of construction workers in Northern Ireland have worked within their current region for their whole career, returning this near to the level seen in 2015 (45%) following an increase in 2018/19 (57%), but lower than the UK average in 2022 (49%).

Half (51%) have worked in their current region for most of their career, meaning that 89% have remained in Northern Ireland for all or most of their career, in line with previous years (91% in 2018/19 and 81% in 2015), and higher than the UK average (83%).

Similarly to 2018/19 and 2015, construction workers in Northern Ireland are among the most likely to state that their last site was in the same region (85%), but the proportion is slightly lower than in 2018/19 (93%) but similar to 2015 (86%).

### Worker origins

Again, similarly to 2018/19 and 2015, construction workers in Northern Ireland are among the most likely to be interviewed in the same region/nation in which they were living when they started their construction career (92%), and this proportion is slightly lower than in 2018/19 (95%) and 2015 (97%).

### Travel to site

A fifth (21%) of construction workers in Northern Ireland have worked no more than 20 miles away, which is lower than in 2018/19 (33%) and 2015 (24%) and also somewhat lower than the UK average in 2022 of 33%. A third (31%) have worked between 21 and 50 miles away, a higher proportion than in 2018/19 (26%) and 2015 (18%), but similar to the UK average in 2022 of 34%.

This leaves nearly half (47%) who have worked more than 50 miles away from their permanent or current home – which is higher than the UK average (32%), including 21% who have worked more than 100 miles away (12% across the UK). This compares to 39% and 14% respectively in 2018/19, so there has been an increase in the proportion who have travelled over 100 miles.

The average furthest distance travelled is 59 miles in Northern Ireland, higher than the UK average of 46 miles.

The average (mean) distance from workers' current residence (taking into account temporary residences) to their current site is 15 miles, continuing the downward trend since 2015 (18 miles in 2018/19 and 30 miles in 2015).

This (slight) downward trend is also reflected in the national picture, where the average distance is 17 miles, down on 18 miles in 2018/19, 22 miles in 2015 and 28 miles in 2012.

More than two-fifths (43%) of those providing a response travel less than 10 miles to work (as in 2018/19), more than half (55%) travel between 10 and 49 miles (as in 2018/19), and the remaining 3% travel further than this (again, as in 2018/19).

### **Use of temporary accommodation**

Just 1% of Northern Ireland construction workers surveyed are staying in temporary accommodation while working at their current site. This compares to 5% nationally, and is slightly lower than in previous years (3% in both 2018/19 and 2015).

### **Site duration and change**

More than two-fifths (44%) of temporary workers in Northern Ireland expect to be still working for their current (at the time of the survey) company/person/agency for more than a year, compared to 25% in 2018/19. As well as greater longevity in posts, there is more longer-term certainty in Northern Ireland than average across the UK, with just 3% not able to estimate the length of time they will stay there, compared to a UK average of 32%. In summary, 1% expect to work for another week, 9% expect another two to four weeks, a fifth (21%) one to six months, a similar proportion (22%) six to twelve months.

Overall, 15% of construction workers in Northern Ireland do not expect to work on that site for more than a month, returning this to the levels seen in 2015 (19%) after a significant drop in 2018/19 (3%). Just 2% believe they will be there for less than a week (compared to none in 2018/19). Two in five (40%) anticipate being on site for more than a month but less than a year, slightly lower than in 2018/19 (44%), but considerably lower than the UK average of 53%.

More than two in five (44%) expect to be on site for more than a year, an increase on the quite consistent levels in previous surveys (28% in 2015; 30% in 2018/19), and higher than the UK average of 13%.

Just 2% are uncertain in this regard, much lower than in 2018/19 (23%) and the UK average in 2022 (22%).

In Northern Ireland, 38% of construction workers were confident that when they finish this job they will get a job that allows them to travel from their permanent home to work on a daily basis. This is a significantly lower proportion than in previous surveys (86% in 2018/19, 68% in 2015 and 79% in 2012), as well as much lower than the UK average in 2022 (69%).

None were sure that this will not be the case (compared to 7% in 2018/19), while the proportion who say it depends where the work is has increased, from 12% in 2018/19 to 18% in the latest survey, as is the case across the UK overall (from 8% in 2018/19 to 20% in 2022).

## Sub-sector and sector mobility

### Sub-sector mobility

New housing continues to be the most common type of construction work undertaken (97%, compared to 85%), followed by public non-housing work (81%, compared to 61%), commercial work (79%, compared to 50%), housing repair and maintenance (79%, compared to 47%), private industrial work (79%, compared to 41%).

Off-site manufacturing is included in the survey for the first time in 2022, and a third of construction workers in Northern Ireland have spent at least 3 months undertaking this type of work.

In terms of the number of types of work undertaken, workers in Northern Ireland are more likely than the UK average to have undertaken multiple types of work, with 39% having undertaken 5 or 6 types of work, compared to the UK average of 15%. Within Northern Ireland, just 12% have undertaken one type, 6% two types, 11% three or four types, compared to 42%, 17% and 22% respectively across the UK.

### Leaving the sector

More than four-fifths (82%) of construction workers in Northern Ireland think it is likely that they will still want to do so, including 52% who say they definitely will be, and 30% who think it is very likely. This is the same as the UK average of 82%.

Just 1% say it is unlikely that they will still want to work in construction in five years' time (compared to a UK average of 7%), with a further 7% hoping to be retired by then.

## Introduction

### Aims and objectives

Following on from previous surveys conducted for CITB in 2018/19, 2015, 2012, 2007 and 2005, BMG Research was commissioned to undertake a UK-wide survey of the mobility and skills of UK construction workers in 2022.

The primary aim of this project is to provide robust and reliable information from site-based workers across the UK construction industry on their qualification levels and the extent of their occupational and geographic mobility. This work enhances the evidence-base for skills planning, particularly in respect of profiling the existing workforce and identifying where skills gaps might emerge as a result of occupational and geographic movement. The findings will assist the industry, government, training providers and others with responsibility for industry skills development to direct their work with greater accuracy and effect.

The specific objectives of this research project are to:

- Examine the qualification levels of the construction industry workforce in the UK and analyse what part qualifications have played in career progression.
- Identify, quantify and analyse the extent to which the workforce in each region/nation within the UK comprises workers originating or living in other parts of the UK (or further afield) and mobility and travel to work.
- Examine the occupations and qualification levels of the mobile UK-origin workforce and of that part of the workforce with overseas origins.
- Examine the scale and extent of occupational mobility within the construction workforce to see how workers in construction occupations change their occupations over time, both within construction and in relation to other sectors, and, related to this, the extent to which managers and supervisors have received training specifically to enhance their managerial skills.

The focus of the survey is on site-based physical delivery of construction projects and, therefore, excludes associated clerical and sales occupations and professionals such as architects, surveyors and office-based managers.

This report discusses the findings within Northern Ireland.

## Method

The 2022 Construction Workforce Mobility Survey followed a similar methodology to that used in the last wave of this research in 2018/19. Overall, 3,005 interviews with construction workers in site-based roles across the UK were required, split between the 12 standard regions/nations. In total, 226 interviews were conducted in Northern Ireland.

### Sampling

This sub-section provides an overview of the sampling methodology employed for the survey. Further detail is provided in the technical report that accompanies this analytical report.

Although this survey focuses on the mobility of individual workers, the sampling strategy was to select construction projects (generally referred to in this report as 'sites') with sufficient workers on-site each day to enable a minimum of 10 interviews. This site-based approach was employed to ensure cost-effective face-to-face interviewing, comparable to that used in previous editions of the survey.

Also as in previous surveys, the commercially produced 'Glenigan' database of construction projects was used as the sampling frame.

Project eligibility criteria were:

- value: £250,000+
- contract stage: 'start on site'; 'contract awarded' or 'bills called' only
- site start date/end date: Active throughout planned fieldwork period

Where sites met these criteria, they were deemed eligible to participate. A target of 30 sites per English region and in each of Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland was set in order to achieve a sufficient number of interviews in each. However, in some instances this target was not achievable due to site refusals to take part, some sites not meeting the eligibility criteria on further screening, or lower than expected numbers of on-site workers being available. In some regions, more than 30 sites were recruited to compensate.

### Telephone-based site recruitment

BMG's research team recruited sites that were eligible and willing to support the research by allowing an interviewer to visit the site to interview at least 10 workers who were mainly in manual trades/roles. A recruitment questionnaire (reproduced in the technical report) was used to check the eligibility of the site and to collect important operational information that would be required by the interviewer visiting the site. The majority of recruitment was undertaken with individual site managers, but in a number of cases the recruiters also spoke with local, regional or national managers (often dependent upon the size of the company). At this stage recruiters booked a convenient time and appointment date for an interviewer

to visit the site and a confirmation email was sent to the relevant individual. Confirmation calls were made ahead of site visits to ensure recall of the visit.

### Site visits

In the majority of cases, interviewers were allocated space to conduct interviews in the offices or canteen area. However, on some sites interviewers worked 'on-the-hoof' in active parts of the site (with or without a 'chaperone'). All interviewers had completed the CSCS Health & Safety Test for Operatives immediately prior to fieldwork and had a PPE (Personal Protective Equipment) kit to comply with site requirements.

Interviews were completed using Computer Assisted Personal Interviewing (CAPI) techniques as well as self-completion techniques. They were undertaken between May and December 2022

Further detail on the interviewing process is provided in the technical report.

The following table shows the number of interviews achieved in each region/nation. In order to obtain strong bases for regional/national analysis, a quota of 200 completed questionnaires per region/nation was set, with an allowance of +/- 50 interviews per region/nation. However, at the analysis stage, weighting factors were applied to survey data to ensure that, for national analysis, regions/nations were represented in their correct proportions according to the size of the construction workforce per region/nation as reported in the government's Annual Population Survey of economically active adults aged 16 and over.

**Figure 1: Number of interviews in the weighted sample by region/nation**

	Interviews	Weighted percentage
North East	206	3.3
North West	271	11.2
Yorkshire and the Humber	200	8.1
East Midlands	232	7.1
West Midlands	306	7.0
East of England	202	11.2
London	443	13.6
South East	283	15.5
South West	201	8.9
Scotland	233	8.2
Wales	202	4.0
<b>Northern Ireland</b>	<b>226</b>	<b>2.5</b>
UK	3,005	100.0

\*Source Annual Population Survey via Nomis: Economically Active adults aged 16+, Oct 2021-Sep 2022; note that total percentage does not add exactly to 100 because of rounding

Further information on sampling and the sites included can be found in the technical report.

### Methodological points to note

In discussing findings from this 2022 survey of mobility and skills in the UK's construction industry workforce, a number of methodological points are relevant, as follows.

Sampling variation (for example, random differences in the composition of the samples in different editions of the survey or in the different regional sub-samples within this year's survey) may induce apparent differences or exaggerate actual differences in survey findings over time or between regions which owe more to these sampling effects than to real world change. This effect is particularly likely when considering smaller sub-sets of data where such effects have the potential to have a proportionately greater impact. The point is not that differences in findings for different groups or over time are necessarily unreal but that a degree of care needs to be applied in interpreting the findings such that their consistency with other related data and with extraneous knowledge of the environment in which the survey took place is taken into account.

Further, on this question of interpretation, it is evident that a broad survey, as here, of large numbers of respondents using a structured questionnaire, produces statements of fact (as far as best survey practice can estimate 'fact') but does not necessarily explain the reason for a particular statistic or its change over time.

### Notes on reading this report

A number of conventions have been employed within this report to assist with the concise presentation of numeric data and with brevity within text.

The base for statistics is described under each figure (table or graph) heading, with the base counts (unweighted) on dedicated rows of tables. Where tables include statistics on many different bases, the unweighted bases for 2022 data are shown in brackets.

All tables and graphs present percentages (unless otherwise stated) calculated upon the bases shown. Where 'mean' averages are shown, these are calculated upon the stated base, minus any responses 'not stated' or choosing a 'don't know/not applicable' response.

Tables and graphs are all labelled with a simple sequential 'Figure Number' and title. All tables and graphs have clearly labelled base sizes (for all sub-groups) and textual definitions of bases. The total of percentages shown in a table may vary slightly from 100% due to rounding to the nearest percentage point.

'\*\*' is used to denote a statistic of less than 0.5% but greater than 0.

Analysis by region/nation should be read with caution because of their limited sub-sample sizes. Unweighted bases are shown throughout for guidance on this point.

## Profile of construction site workers

This first section of the report provides a profile of construction site workers interviewed in the survey and where possible makes comparisons with previous years' surveys. The section examines: *personal demographics*, including gender, age, ethnicity, nationality (including length of time that workers have been resident in the UK) and disability; *current occupation*; *employment status* i.e. whether employed directly, self-employed or by an agency; and *employment contract basis* i.e. whether working on a temporary or permanent basis.

The section then moves on to examine career histories, including: the number of years respondents have worked in the construction industry, pre-construction employment histories, occupational switching, and progression within the construction sector.

### Personal demographics

Figures 2 to 5 detail the demographic profile (gender, age, ethnicity, nationality and disability) of the 2022 sample of construction workers, compared with the 2018/19 and 2015 surveys and official statistics from the Annual Population Survey (where comparisons are possible).

#### Gender

As in previous years of the survey, the vast majority of construction workers in manual roles interviewed in Northern Ireland were male (100% - rounded, less than 0.5% were female), in line with the UK average. Male dominance is greater in the survey sample than in the UK construction workforce as a whole as this survey does not include those in office-based roles within the construction industry (either administrative or professional, where the incidence of female workers is higher) and interviews were conducted on relatively large construction sites (valued at £250,000+, with at least 10 workers), thereby excluding female construction workers on small building sites and in maintenance and repair (an industry segment in which women, for example in some small all-female businesses, may be slightly more frequent). More detail is shown in the following figure.

**Figure 2: Gender profile of the sample compared with the UK profile and the Annual Population Survey**

*Base: All respondents*

	NI 2022 %	UK 2022 %	UK Workforce* %
Male	100	97	52
Female	<0.5	2	48
Transgender	0	<0.5	-
Non-binary	0	<0.5	-
Prefer not to say	0	<0.5	-
<i>Unweighted bases</i>	<i>226</i>	<i>3,005</i>	<i>33,808,600</i>

Q43 \*Source Annual Population Survey via Nomis: Economically Active adults aged 16+ Oct 2021-Sep 2022

## Age

Within Northern Ireland, the youngest age group (16 to 24 year olds) accounts for one in seven construction workers (15%), fewer than in 2018/19 (19%), but similar to 2015 (14%) and 2012 (17%). It is a slightly smaller proportion than the survey data for the UK overall in 2022 (19%) but more than across the UK workforce overall (13%).

The proportion aged 25 to 44 is lower than in 2018/19, 2015 and 2012 (37% compared to 47%, 50% and 54% respectively) and lower than the UK workforce overall in 2022 (56%).

Those aged 45 to 59 account for 36%, continuing an upward trend since 2015 (30%) and 2018/19 (25%), and higher than the 28% in the UK workforce overall.

One in eight (12%) are aged 60 or over, a higher proportion than in previous years (8% in 2018/19 and 4% in 2015), and higher than across the UK workforce overall (4%).

### Figure 3: Age profile of the sample compared with 2018/19, 2015 and 2012 and the Annual Population Survey

Base: All respondents

	NI 2022 %	NI 2018/9 %	NI 2015 %	NI 2012 %	UK 2022 %		UK Workforce* %
16 to 19 years	8	6	4	4	6	16 to 19 years	4
20 to 24 years	7	13	10	13	13	20 to 24 years	9
25 to 34 years	15	27	27	33	26	25 to 34 years	23
35 to 44 years	22	20	23	21	24	35 to 49 years	33
45 to 54 years	27	18	23	18	17	50 to 64 years	28
55 to 59 years	9	7	7	8	8		
60+ years	12	8	4		6	65+ years	4
<i>Unweighted bases</i>	226	155	274	406	3,005		33,808,600

Q44 \*Source Annual Population Survey via Nomis: Economically Active adults aged 16+ Oct 2021-Sep 2022

## Ethnicity

In terms of ethnicity, the vast majority of construction workers in Northern Ireland continue to be of White origin (99% compared to 97% in 2018/19, 98% in 2015 and 2012).

On this basis, 1% are of Black, Asian or Mixed origin, lower than the UK working age population (12%). Ethnic minority groups are much less well represented in Northern Ireland than the UK average.

### Figure 4: Ethnic profile of the sample compared with previous surveys and the UK population

Base: All respondents

	<b>NI 2022 %</b>	<b>NI 2018/19 %</b>	<b>NI 2015 %</b>	<b>NI 2012 %</b>	<b>UK 2022 %</b>	<b>UK population aged 16 to 64* %</b>
White	99	97	98	98	91	84
Black	0	1	0	0	2	4
Asian	0	0	0	0	2	6
Mixed	0	0	-	-	1	2
Other/Not stated	1	2	2	2	3	4
<i>Unweighted bases</i>	<i>266</i>	<i>155</i>	<i>274</i>	<i>406</i>	<i>3,005</i>	<i>41,439,500</i>

Q49 \*Source Annual population Survey via Nomis: UK population aged 16-64 Oct 2021-Sep 2022

Figure 5 summarises the proportion of construction workers of non-white (ethnic minority) origin overall and within each region/nation and compares the profile with construction workers from the 2018/19, 2015 and 2012 surveys and with the population (aged 16-64) of each region/nation as a whole.

At 1%, the proportion of Northern Ireland construction workers of ethnic minority origin is the lowest (alongside the North West) across all UK regions. This reflects the profile of the 16-64 population in Northern Ireland to a great extent, although it is still lower than that proportion (4%).

### Figure 5: Proportion of construction workers of ethnic minority (Non-White) origin

Base: All respondents

	UK 2022 %	UK 2018/9 %	UK 2015 %	UK 2012 %	Non-white (ethnic minority) population aged 16-64* %
UK	7	6	4	4	14
East Midlands	3	2	2	2	14
East of England	5	5	3	4	12
London	19	15	15	12	41
North East	2	<0.5	<0.5	<0.5	6
North West	1	3	1	2	13
South East	11	10	8	3	12
South West	3	5	2	1	6
West Midlands	7	7	5	9	22
Yorkshire and the Humber	5	5	2	1	12
Wales	3	2	2	<0.5	5
Scotland	3	1	2	1	6
<b>Northern Ireland</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>&lt;0.5</b>	<b>4</b>
<i>Unweighted bases</i>	<i>3,005</i>	<i>4,048</i>	<i>4,771</i>	<i>4,933</i>	<i>41,439,500</i>

Q49 \*Source Annual population Survey via Nomis: UK Population aged 16-64 by ethnicity Oct 2021-Sep 2022

## Country of origin

Construction workers were asked for details about their nationality and country of origin. The table below focuses on the non-UK nationalities that are most frequent in the 2022 survey.

As was the case in 2018/19, the majority of construction workers in Northern Ireland (94%, compared to 95% in 2018/19) originated from the UK and the remaining 6% originated from another country, 4% from within the EU – which was mainly the Republic of Ireland (3%), and 2% from outside the EU.

**Figure 6: Country of origin of non-UK national construction workers in the UK by region/nation as a percentage of the total workforce**

Base: All respondents

Row percentages	Unweighted bases	EU %	Republic of Ireland %	Non-EU %	Poland %	Albania, Romania, Lithuania %
UK	3,005	9	1	8	1	7
East Midlands	232	5	<0.5	8	1	4
East of England	202	16	0	6	1	14
London	443	30	2	29	2	26
North East	206	2	0	1	1	<0.5
North West	271	2	1	2	<0.5	1
South East	283	11	1	7	2	8
South West	201	2	<0.5	2	1	1
West Midlands	306	2	<0.5	6	1	1
Yorkshire and the Humber	200	6	0	3	1	2
Wales	202	3	<0.5	3	<0.5	1
Scotland	233	4	2	2	<0.5	<0.5
<b>Northern Ireland</b>	<b>226</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>

Q45 Note: Republic of Ireland, Poland, Romania and Lithuania are included in the EU proportion.

Albania is included in the non-EU proportion. In these cases, therefore, are these individual country proportions *additional* to the respective EU/non-EU proportions

### Holding of passports

Nearly half of construction workers in Northern Ireland hold a passport for another country (48%), which compares with 30% in 2018/19, and with a UK average of 13%. Their passports are of an EU member state, most probably Republic of Ireland. Most were born in the UK (in Northern Ireland) but hold dual citizenship of the UK and the Republic of Ireland. Of those that were not born in the UK, two-thirds hold dual citizenship (67%). Fewer than half hold a UK passport (44%), with a further 8% reporting that they do not have a passport.

### Length of time living in the UK

In line with 2018/19, the majority of Northern Ireland construction workers have lived in the UK all of their life (92% compared to 90% in 2018/19). Again, as was the case in 2018/19, this is significantly higher than the UK average of 80%. Just 2% have lived in the UK less than five years. This is despite nearly half holding a non-UK passport.

### Figure 7: Length of time that construction workers have lived in the UK by region/nation

Base: All respondents

Row percentages	Unweighted bases	All their lives %	Up to 5 years %	More than 5 years %
UK	3,005	80	5	14
East Midlands	232	83	3	13
East of England	202	74	2	22
London	443	39	16	39
North East	206	96	<0.5	4
North West	271	93	<0.5	6
South East	283	77	7	16
South West	201	87	1	8
West Midlands	306	91	1	7
Yorkshire and the Humber	200	91	0	9
Wales	202	90	2	6
Scotland	233	92	5	3
<b>Northern Ireland</b>	<b>226</b>	<b>92</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>5</b>

Q39

### Disability

Amongst all construction workers in Northern Ireland, 3% report that they have a long-term illness, health problem, or disability which limits the type of work they can do (as in 2018/19), in line with the UK average in 2022 of 3%.

## Occupational profile

### Current job role

All workers were asked what their current trade or occupation is at their site. Respondents in a supervisory role were asked to detail their trade/occupation background, as their supervisory roles would be asked about later in the survey. Figure 8 summarises all the trades/occupations mentioned by at least 1% of the sample and compares this with the occupational profile from the 2018/19 and 2015 surveys.

In 2022, carpenters/joiners, labourers/general operatives, bricklayers, site managers and plant/machine operatives each account for around one in eight construction workers. There are fewer labourers/general operatives and more carpenters/joiners in Northern Ireland than the UK average, but otherwise the occupational profile is similar to the UK average.

### Figure 8: Occupational profile

Base: All respondents. Mentions 1%+

	NI 2022 %	NI 2018/19 %	NI 2015 %	UK 2022 %
Carpenter/joiner	14	14	12	9
Labourer/General operative	13	15	20	18
Bricklayer	13	20	6	10
Site manager	12	6	5	9
Plant/machine operative (e.g. Fork lift/JCB)	12	15	9	9
Electrician	7	9	8	5
Technical e.g. surveyor, maintenance technician	5	3	8	3
Scaffolder	3	3	2	3
Ground worker	2	2	<0.5	5
Plumber	2	3	3	3
Steel erector/rigger	2	-	-	2
Painter/decorator	2	3	1	1
Plasterer	2	3	5	1
Supervisor/foreman	1	-	-	2
Roofer	1	1	1	3
Tiler	1	-	-	<0.5
<i>Unweighted bases</i>	<i>226</i>	<i>155</i>	<i>274</i>	<i>3,005</i>

Q5

### Supervisory roles

Two-fifths (40%) of all construction workers in Northern Ireland say they perform a supervisory or management role on their site, around twice that of previously (21% in 2018/19 and 20% in 2015), and higher than the UK average in 2022 (28%).

As was the case previously, the incidence of workers in a supervisory role increases with age, from 9% of 16 to 24 year olds to 52% of those aged 45+

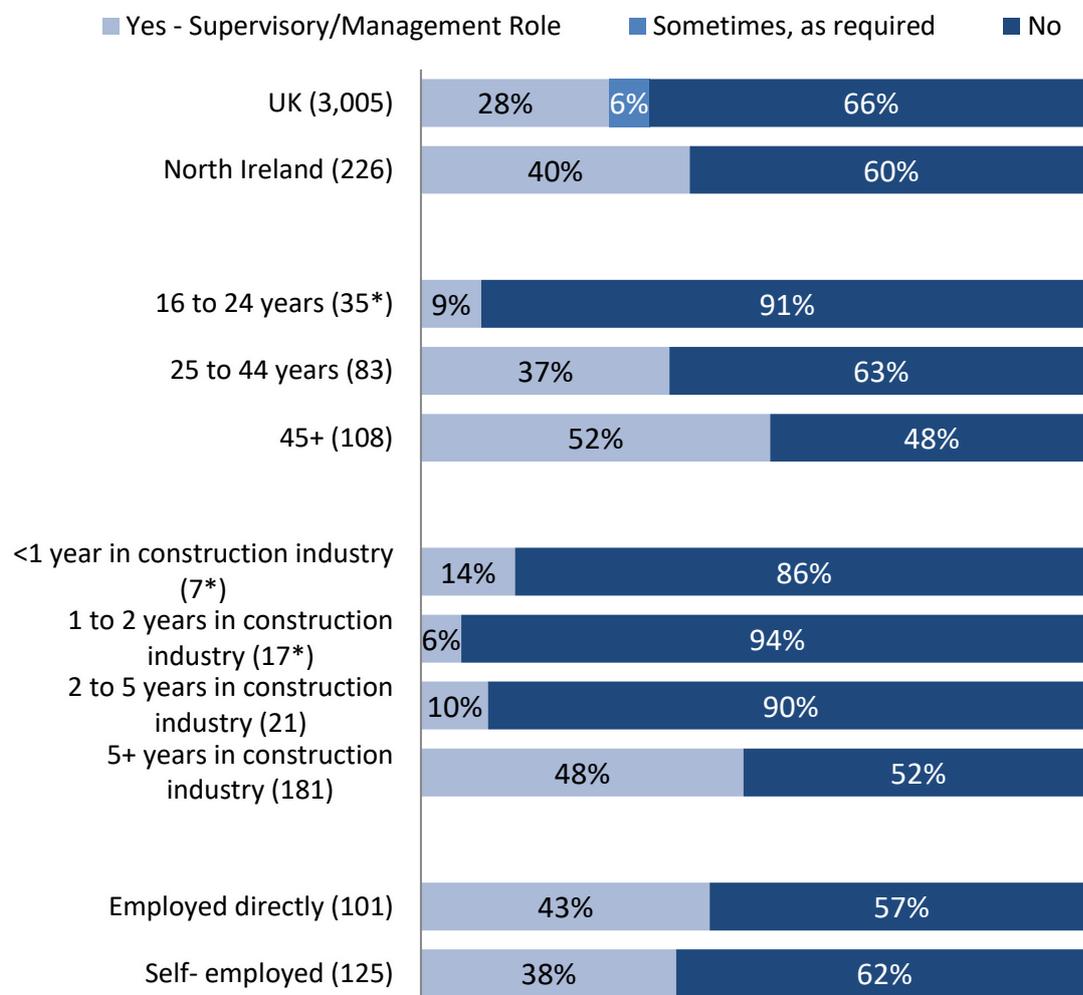
A higher proportion of those who have worked in the construction industry for more than 5 years have supervisory roles than those that have worked in the industry for less than 5 years (48%, compared to around 10% of those who have worked in the industry for less than five years).

As would be expected, workers who are directly employed by a company continue to be significantly more likely than those who are self-employed to perform a supervisory role (43% compared to 38%).

These differences are summarised in the following figure.

**Figure 9: Whether respondents perform a supervisory or management role**

*Base: All respondents*



Q8. Unweighted bases in parentheses

\* Caution: low base

### Employment status

More than half (55%) of construction workers in Northern Ireland are self-employed, and fewer than half are employed directly by a company (45%) in 2022. This is reversal of the balance between self-employment and direct employment compared to previously (46% v 52% in 2018/19 and 33% to 64% in 2015). In 2022, self-employment among construction workers in Northern Ireland is higher than the national average (42%).

None report working for an employment agency, and this proportion has tended to be very low in Northern Ireland in previous years.

The proportion of workers who are self-employed increases with the length of time worked in the industry, from none of those in the industry for less than a year, to 61% of those in the sector for over five years.

### Figure 10: Employment status

Base: All respondents

	NI 2022 %	NI 2018/19 %	NI 2015 %	UK 2022 %	Years working in construction %			
					<1	1-2	2-5	5+
Self-employed	55	46	33	42	0	35	38	61
Employed directly by a company (contractor or sub- contractor)	45	52	64	48	100	65	62	39
Working for an employment agency	-	1	3	9	-	-	-	-
Working on some other basis	-	1	1	1	-	-	-	-
<i>Unweighted bases</i>	226	155	274	3,005	7*	17*	21*	181

Q20

\* Caution: low base

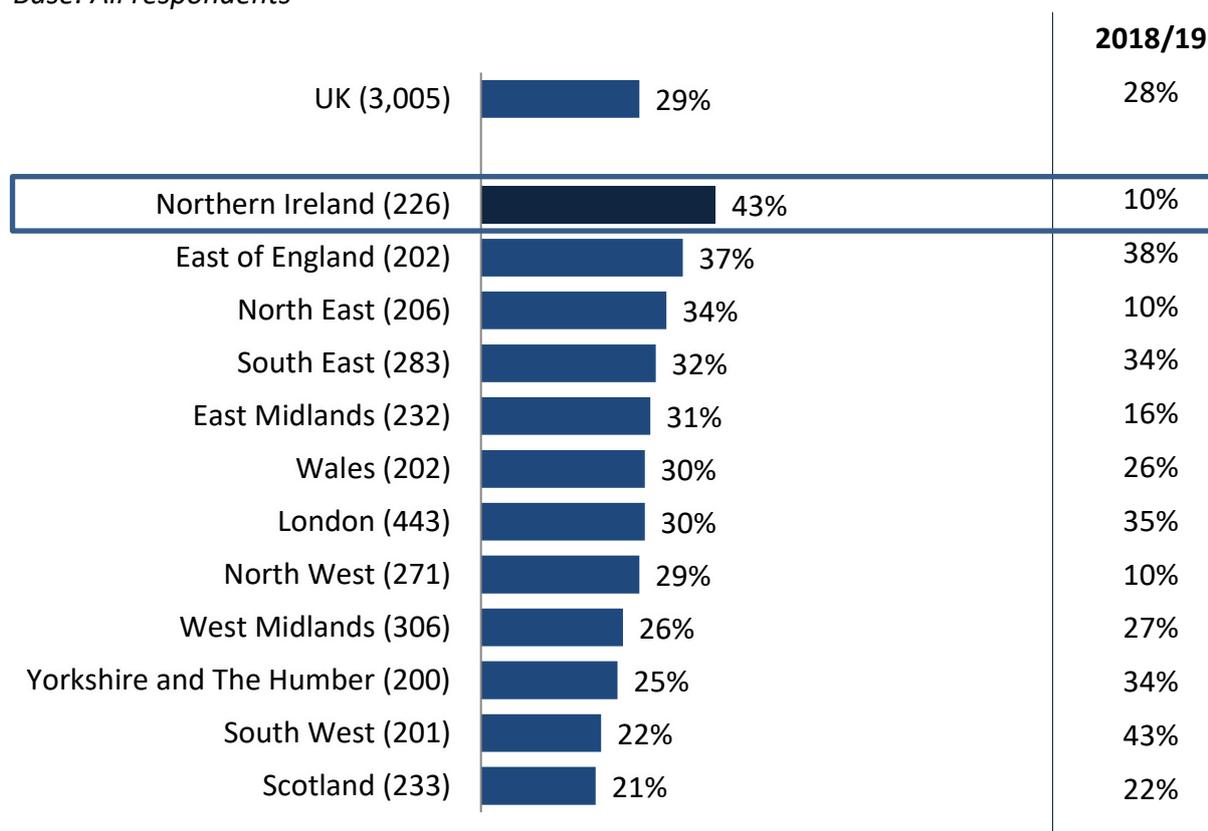
### Employment contract basis

More than two-fifths (43%) of construction workers in Northern Ireland are employed on a temporary, rather than a permanent basis (57%), and this proportion is much higher than in 2018/19 (10% and 88% respectively). None in 2022 believe they have an ‘other’ type of contract arrangement.

Northern Ireland has a higher level of temporary employment than the UK average of 29%.

**Figure 11: Proportion of workers employed on a temporary basis, by region/nation (including fixed-term contracts)**

Base: All respondents



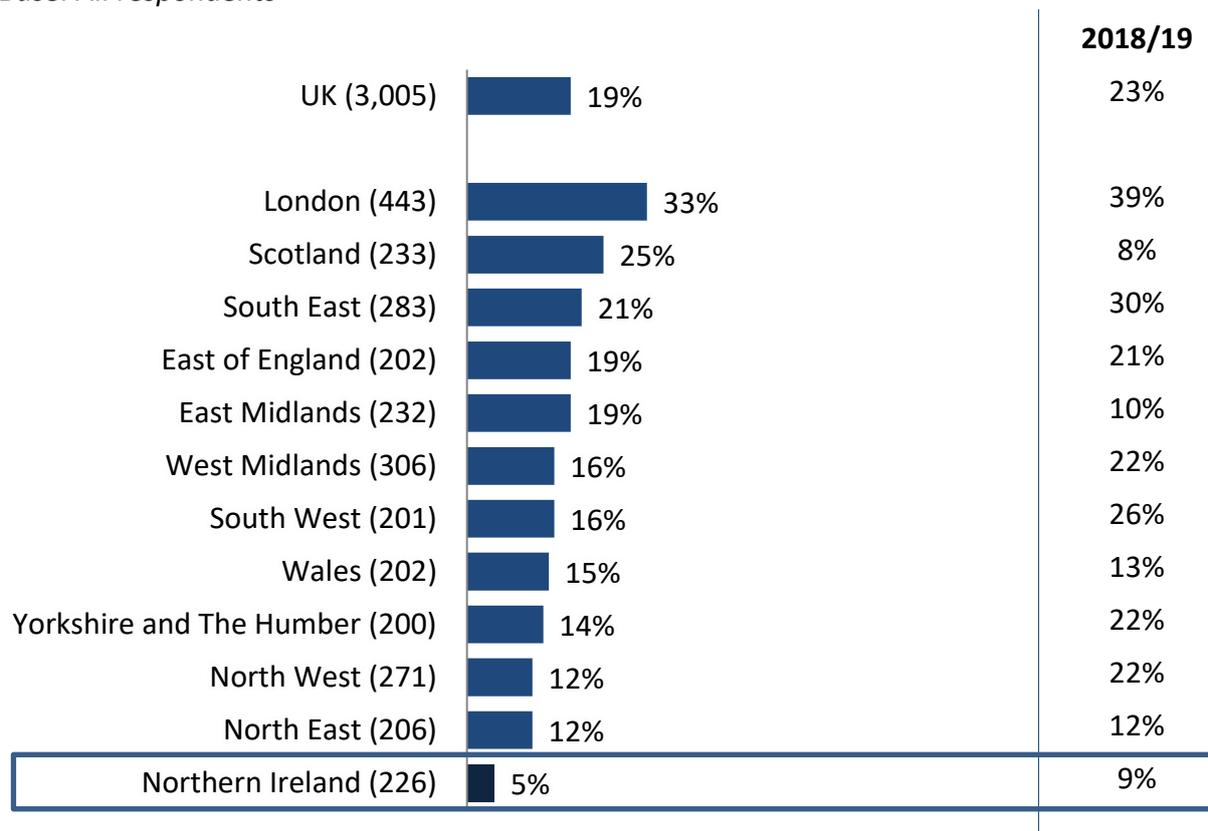
Q21. Unweighted bases in parentheses

### Hours worked

Construction workers in Northern Ireland, as across the UK as a whole, are most likely to report that they work between 40 and 49 hours per week (70%, compared to a UK average of 59%), while just 5% work more than 50 hours a week, down on 2018/19 (9%), and workers in Northern Ireland tend to be less likely to work these very long hours than the UK average in 2022 (19%).

**Figure 12: Proportion of workers that typically work 50 or more hours per week, by region/nation**

Base: All respondents



Q22. Unweighted bases in parentheses

## Work histories

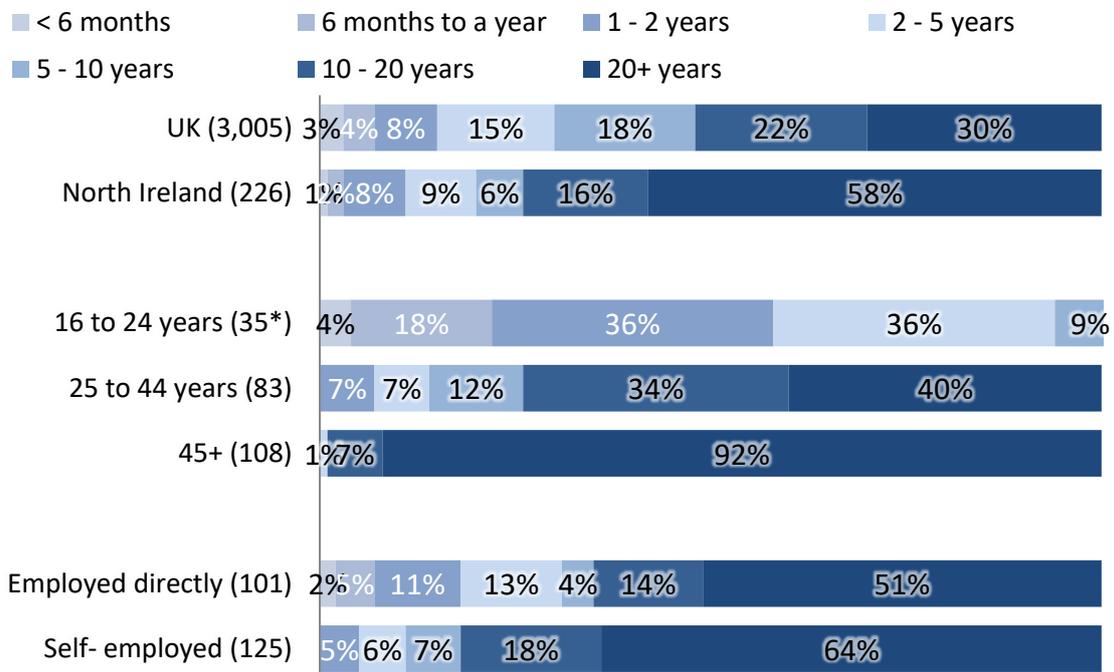
### Time in the sector

More than half (58%) of all construction workers in Northern Ireland have worked in construction for more than 20 years, which is higher than in the UK average (30%). Three-quarters (74%) have worked in the industry for at least 10 years, in line with the 2018/19 (71%).

As would be expected, the length of experience in the industry increases with age, with 92% of all construction workers aged 45 and over having more than 20 years' experience of working in the sector (81% in 2018/19).

**Figure 13: Years spent working in the construction sector**

Base: All respondents



Q1. Unweighted bases in parentheses

\* Caution: low base

Compared with previous years, Figure 14 shows an increase in the proportion working in the sector for more than 20 years, from 36% in 2015 and 37% in 2018/19 to 58% in the latest survey.

**Figure 14: Years spent working in the construction sector (cumulative)**

*Base: All respondents*

	<b>NI 2022</b> %	<b>NI 2018/19</b> %	<b>NI 2015</b> %	<b>UK 2022</b> %
Less than 6 months	1	3	5	3
Up to a year	3	6	8	7
Up to 2 years	11	10	11	14
Up to 5 years	20	21	17	29
Up to 10 years	26	29	31	48
Up to 20 years	42	63	63	70
More than 20 years	58	37	36	30
<i>Unweighted bases</i>	<i>226</i>	<i>155</i>	<i>274</i>	<i>3,005</i>

Q1

## Pre-construction employment histories

The proportion of Northern Ireland construction workers who have worked pretty much continuously in the industry has remained at a similar level to previous years (78% now and in 2018/19), and Northern Ireland is well above the UK average in this respect (61%).

**Figure 15: Statement that best describes respondents' work histories since leaving full time education and starting their first job in construction.**

*All respondents*

	NI 2022 %	NI 2018/19 %	NI 2015 %	UK 2022 %	Age %			
					16 - 19	20 - 24	25 - 44	45+
I've worked in construction pretty much continuously (and not worked in any other industry)	78	78	69	61	89	63	76	80
I have only worked in construction jobs but have had spells of being out of work	-	1	8	6	-	-	-	-
My first job was in construction but I've also worked in other sorts of jobs in one or more other industries	<0.5	12	7	8	0	0	0	1
My first job after full time education was NOT in construction. I moved into the industry after working in other sort(s) of jobs	22	6	10	18	11	38	24	19
This is my first job. I haven't worked in any other industry.	-	1	5	4	-	-	-	-
This is my first job in construction but I have worked in other sorts of jobs in one or more other industries	-	2	1	4	-	-	-	-
<i>Unweighted bases</i>	226	155	274	3,005	19*	16*	83	108

Q2

\* Caution: low base

Overall, 22% of construction workers in Northern Ireland say that their first job after full-time education was not in construction and that they moved into the industry after working in other sorts of jobs/sectors. This is a much higher proportion than previously (6% in 2018/19 and 10% in 2015), and is higher than the UK average (18%).

Very few workers have moved in and out of construction over the years (less than half per cent, far fewer than previously).

Those who had worked in other sectors before starting their construction careers were asked to give details of what they were doing immediately before they started working in construction. Base sizes are low, so caution should be shown with regard to the results, but the most common sectors in which construction workers had started their careers were wholesale and retail trade (18%) and agriculture, forestry and fishing (14%). The pattern of response largely reflects that in the UK, with a decline in those who started in manufacturing (from 23% in 2015 to just 6% in 2022).

### Figure 16: Industry worked in before starting work in the construction sector

Base: Where first job was not in construction Sectors mentioned by >5% of respondents

	NI 2022 %	NI 2018/19 %	NI 2015 %	UK 2022 %
A – Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing	14	40	23	4
C – Manufacturing	6	20	23	20
G – Wholesale and retail trade; repair of motor vehicles and motorcycles	18	20	17	22
H – Transportation and storage	8	10	7	10
I – Accommodation	10	-	-	10
M – Professional, scientific and technical	6	-	-	2
N – Administrative and support services	8	-	-	5
<i>Unweighted bases</i>	<i>49*</i>	<i>10*</i>	<i>30*</i>	<i>624</i>

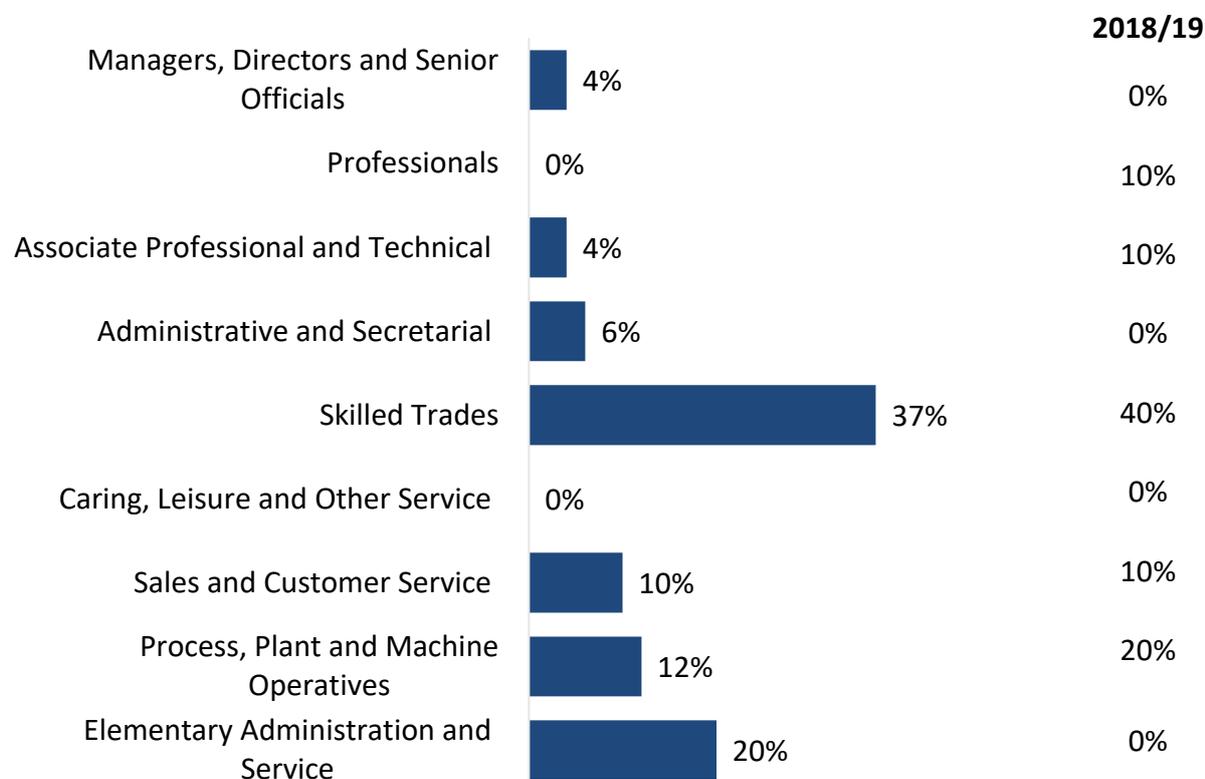
Q3

\* Caution: low base

In terms of the job roles that respondents have held in other sectors, the highest proportions were in skilled trades occupations (37%), elementary administration and service occupations (20%), and process, plant and machine operatives (12%).

**Figure 17: Job roles undertaken in other sectors in 2022 compared with 2018/2019**

Base: Where first job was not in construction



Q3. Unweighted base (49)

## Occupational switching and progression within construction

All workers were asked whether they have worked in differing construction roles or occupations whilst working in the construction industry.

Overall, more than half (54%) of all construction workers in Northern Ireland have worked in more than one construction trade or occupation whilst working in the construction industry, a higher proportion than in 2018/19 (40%) and 2015 (39%), and higher than the UK average in 2022 (35%).

Naturally, the proportion of workers who have had more than one role increases with age, from 36% of those aged under 25 to 63% of those aged 45 or over, and with the length of time respondents have worked in construction, from 14% of those with up to a year's experience to 61% amongst those with 5 or more years of experience.

Underlining the greater propensity for construction workers in a supervisory role to have worked in more than one construction trade or occupation, site managers are significantly more likely than average to have done so (89%), as are plant/machine operatives (78%).

### Figure 18: Percentages having had other construction roles by current occupation

Base: All respondents

MORE likely to have had more than one role (average 54% in 2022)			LESS likely to have had more than one role (average 54% in 2022)		
	NI 2022 %	UK 2022 %		NI 2022 %	UK 2022 %
Site manager (28*)	89	56	Bricklayer (29*)	48	26
			Carpenter/joiner (32*)	50	22
Plant / Mach. Op. (27*)	78	48	Labourer/General operative (30*)	43	28
Unweighted bases for 2022 Northern Ireland in parentheses					

Q6

\* Caution: low base

Construction workers who have worked in other roles/occupations within the construction industry, other than the role they are currently in, were asked to specify which trades/occupations they had previously worked in, with each worker able to list all previous occupations.

Amongst the 54% of all Northern Ireland construction workers that had worked in at least one other role/occupation, 20% had worked in 1 previous role, 56% had worked in 2 previous roles, 15% had worked in 3 roles/occupations and 10% had worked in 4 roles/occupations.

Workers are most likely to have previously worked as a labourer/general operative (33%), while only slightly fewer had previously worked as a carpenter/joiner (29%). Experience in carpentry/joinery is more common in Northern Ireland than the UK average.

**Figure 19: Previous occupations/trades in the construction sector**

*Base: Workers that have switched occupations within construction*

<b>Occupation</b>	<b>NI 2022 %</b>	<b>UK 2022 %</b>
Labourer/General operative	33	39
Carpenter/joiner	29	15
Bricklayer	15	12
Plant/machine operative (e.g. Fork lift/JCB)	11	10
Plasterer	8	5
Electrician	4	2
Plumber	4	3
Scaffolder	4	2
Banksman/Banksperson	3	7
Welder	3	1
Site manager	2	4
Steel erector/rigger	2	2
Technical e.g. surveyor, maintenance technician	2	2
Roofer	1	4
Ceiling fixer	1	3
Pipe fitter	1	2
Insulation specialist	1	2
Other	11	10
<i>Unweighted base</i>	<i>123</i>	<i>1,082</i>

Q7

### Future career plans

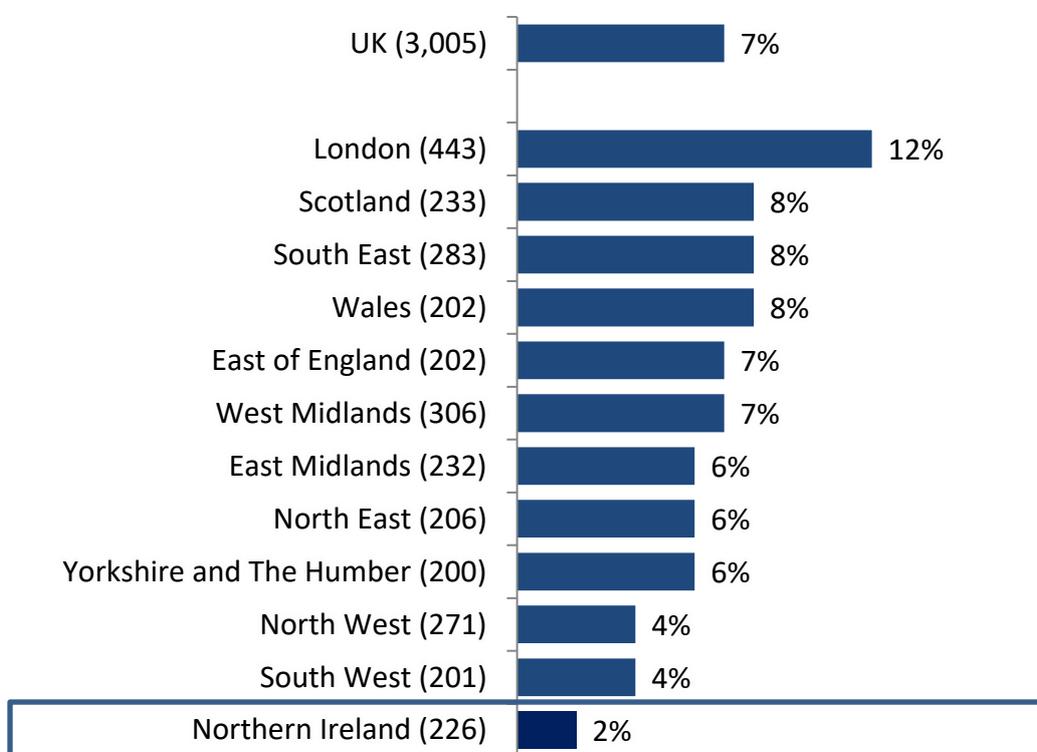
Most construction workers in Northern Ireland (97%) would like to carry on in the same trade or occupation, and this is higher than in 2018/19 (87%) and the UK average in 2022 (80%).

Just 2% would like to change their trade/occupation, fewer than in 2018/19 (5%) and the UK average in 2022 (7%). The remainder would like to leave construction (1%).

Self-employed construction workers are slightly less likely than those directly employed to want to carry on working in the same trade or occupation (95%, compared to 99%).

**Figure 20: Proportion of construction workers who would like to change their trade or occupation within the construction sector, by region/nation**

*Base: All respondents*



*Q33. Unweighted bases in parentheses*

## Qualifications and skills

This section of the report explores construction workers' qualification levels and other accreditations, examining differences by key variables such as region/nation, occupation and length of experience. The issues covered in this section include:

- the range of skill cards and certificates held by workers
- construction-related qualifications: gained before starting work in the construction sector; since starting work in the sector; and being worked towards
- workers' self-perceived need for additional training in basic skills

### Construction skill cards and certificates

Within Northern Ireland, amongst those participating in the 2022 survey, very few held construction-related qualifications before starting work in the sector, and furthermore very few have gained these while working in construction. However, the vast majority of construction workers in Northern Ireland (97%) reported holding a skill card or certificate (e.g. CSCS or CSR), which reflects findings from previous surveys. Northern Ireland has among the highest levels of card-holding in 2022, maintaining that level while there has been a decrease in this respect in some other regions, and across the UK overall.

Correspondingly, the proportion who have no cards is 3% in 2022, which is similar to 2018/19 (2%).

#### Figure 21: Proportion of workers who have a skill card/certificate, by region/nation

Base: All respondents

	2022	2018/19	2015	2012
	%	%	%	%
UK Total (3,005)	93	97	96	97
South West (201)	97	97	96	97
<b>Northern Ireland (226)</b>	<b>97</b>	<b>97</b>	<b>90</b>	<b>100</b>
North East (206)	97	94	96	99
Wales (202)	95	92	92	92
Yorkshire and the Humber (200)	94	98	97	97
South East (283)	93	98	98	96
London (443)	92	98	98	96
West Midlands (306)	91	99	98	100
Scotland (233)	91	99	88	98
North West (271)	91	98	97	99
East of England (202)	91	97	96	98
East Midlands (232)	90	93	93	99
<i>Unweighted bases for 2022 in parentheses</i>				

Q12

In terms of the type of skill card or certificate held by construction workers in Northern Ireland, the CSR (Construction Skills Register (NI)) is the most commonly held (96%), to a greater extent than 2018/19 (85%) and 2015 (70%).

Around one in ten (9%) hold the CSCS (Construction Skills Certification Scheme (GB)), broadly in line with 2018/19 (7%), and a similar proportion (8%) hold the CPCS (Construction Plant Competence Scheme), twice as many as in 2018/19 (4%). Just 1% hold the CISRS (Construction Industry Scaffolders Record Scheme), in line with 2018/19 (2%).

### Figure 22: Type of skill card/certificate held

Base: All respondents

	NI 2022 %	NI 2018/19 %	NI 2015 %
CSCS (Construction Skills Certification Scheme) (GB)	9	7	17
CSR (Construction Skills Register) (NI)	96	85	70
CISRS (Construction Industry Scaffolders Record Scheme)	1	2	1
CPCS (Construction Plant Competence Scheme)	8	4	8
Other	12	3	1
<i>Unweighted bases</i>	226	155	274

Q12

Workers who hold a CSCS or CSR (NI) cards were asked what colour their cards are. Overall, 38% of CSCS card holders have Blue cards, which is a lower proportion than in 2018/19 (55%), while a similar proportion have Gold cards (38%; supervisor – 19%; advance craft/skilled worker -19%), which is a higher proportion than previously (18%). Those holding a CSR card are most likely to have a Green card (46%), a higher proportion than in 2018/19 (37%). There has been little change in the propensity to hold other colours of CSR card in Northern Ireland compared with 2018/19.

**Figure 23: Colour of CSCS/CSR cards held***Base: Where CSCS/CSR card is held*

	<b>CSCS %</b>		<b>CSR %</b>
Red – Trainee	5	Red - Apprenticeship/Trainee	4
Red – Experienced worker card	5	Red - Trained Plant Operator	<0.5
		Red – Trainee Supervisor	1
Green – construction site operative card for general site workers	10	Green – Construction Operative (for general site workers)	46
Blue – skilled	38	Blue – Operative/ Craft	4
		Blue – Plant Operator	12
		Blue – Basic Scaffolder	1
Gold – supervisor card	19	Gold - Craft/Supervisor Card	25
Gold – Advanced craft/skilled worker	19	Gold - Advanced Scaffolder	3
		Platinum – Manager Card	2
Black – contracts manager card	5	Black - Senior Managers Card	1
Unsure	-	Unsure	<0.5
<i>Unweighted bases</i>	<i>21</i>	<i>Unweighted bases</i>	<i>216</i>

Q13

Card colours vary significantly according to current occupation/trade. Labourers/general operatives are more likely than average to hold Green cards (80%), while site managers (74%) and carpenters/joiners (55%) are more likely than average to hold Gold cards.

**Figure 24: Colour of CSR card held, by current occupation***Base: All respondents*

	Bricklayer %	Carpenter/ joiner %	Labourer/ general operative %	Plant/ machine operative (e.g. fork lift/JCB) %	Site manager %
Red - Apprenticeship/ Trainee	0	10	7	0	0
Red - Trained Plant Operator	0	0	3	0	0
Red – Trainee Supervisor	0	3	0	0	0
Green – Construction Operative	50	26	80	46	11
Blue – Operative/ Craft	7	3	0	12	0
Blue – Plant Operator	7	3	10	38	0
Blue – Basic Scaffolder	0	0	0	0	0
Gold - Craft/Supervisor Card	36	52	0	4	59
Gold - Advanced Scaffolder	0	3	0	0	15
Platinum – Manager Card	0	0	0	0	7
Black - Senior Managers Card	0	0	0	0	7
<i>Unweighted bases</i>	<i>28*</i>	<i>31*</i>	<i>30*</i>	<i>26*</i>	<i>23*</i>

Q13

\* *Caution: low base*

## Additional formal training

### Self-assessment of basic skills needs

Given the need for construction workers to read instructions and record information it is important to ensure that the workforce has the skills required to perform these tasks. The survey therefore asked all workers whether or not they perceive the need for training in any of a list of specified basic skills to help with their work.

Overall, 19% of construction workers in Northern Ireland believe they would benefit from some form of training in basic skills (compared to 10% in 2018/19, 17% in 2015 and 16% in 2012). This echoes the UK average (19%), which has also seen an increase since 2018/19 (11%).

In terms of the type of training required, there is a relatively even split across reading (3%), writing (4%), speaking English (2%), Maths (11%) and digital skills (12%). The findings highlight a greater need for Maths and digital skills in Northern Ireland compared to the UK average (6% and 4% respectively UK-wide).

**Figure 25: Self-assessed need for training in basic skills***Base: All respondents*

	NI 2022 %	NI 2018/19 %	NI 2015 %	NI 2012 %	UK 2022 %
ANY	19	10	17	16	19
Reading	3	4	6	7	9
Writing	4	5	8	7	7
Speaking English	2	2	5	4	9
Maths	11	8	9	9	6
Digital skills	12	-	-	-	4
<i>Unweighted bases</i>	<i>226</i>	<i>155</i>	<i>274</i>	<i>406</i>	<i>3,005</i>

Q37

**Current study for additional construction qualifications**

Just 1% of all construction workers in Northern Ireland are currently working towards formal qualifications relevant to the construction industry (excluding supervisory or managerial qualifications). This is much lower than the UK average (13%), and compares with 12% in 2018/19 and 7% in 2015.

As in previous surveys, the likelihood that workers are currently working towards qualifications is significantly higher amongst the youngest workers (5% of 16 to 19 year olds and 6% of 20 to 24 year olds), but it is low across the board compared with UK-wide within Northern Ireland.

**Figure 26: Proportion working towards additional construction qualifications***Base: All respondents*

		NI 2022 %	NI 2018/19 %	NI 2015 %	UK 2022 %
Total (226)		1	12	7	13
Age	16 to 19 years (19*)	5	45	57	43
	20 to 24 years (16*)	6	22	23	24
	25 to 44 years (83)	0	4	10	11
	45+ years (108)	1	1	3	5
Length of time in construction	<1 year (7*)	0	25	36	28
	1 to 2 years (17*)	6	11	41	27
	2 to 5 years (21*)	5	19	20	20
	5+ years (181)	1	4	8	8
Contract type	Employed directly (101)	3	7	20	15
	Self-employed (125)	0	2	6	10
<i>Unweighted bases for 2022 in parentheses</i>					

Q18

\* Caution: low base

### Supervisory and managerial qualifications and training

As reported earlier, two-fifths (40%) of construction workers Northern Ireland perform a supervisory or management role at their site.

Amongst those who do not currently perform supervisory/management roles and have not had this role before, 28% want to become a supervisor or manager in the future, more than the 23% who did so in 2018/19, and one in twenty (6%) previously held that role and want to return to that status (more than the 3% in 2018/19). Three in five (59%) are certain that they do not want to, and the remaining 7% are unsure.

Workers in Northern Ireland are keener to give it these roles a try than their counterparts across the UK (17% UK-wide), but as likely to reject the idea.

By age, those aged 20 to 24 are most likely to want to be supervisors/managers (92%), while 81% of those aged 45 or over do not wish to, and this is reflected in the length of time in construction, where more than three-fifths of those in the industry for up to 5 years want to be supervisors/managers, and 73% of those in the industry for over five years do not.

There are few real differences by contract type.

#### Figure 27: Whether those who are not currently supervisors want to be one in the future

Base: Where do not perform supervisor/management roles on site

		Yes, but have not done it before %	Yes and have done it before %	No %	Maybe/ depends %
2022 UK (1,982)		17	6	59	18
2022 Northern Ireland (135)		28	6	59	7
Age	16 to 19 years (19*)	63	0	21	16
	20 to 24 years (12*)	83	8	8	0
	25 to 44 years (52)	25	2	63	10
	45+ years (52)	6	12	81	2
Length of time in construction	<1 year (6*)	67	0	33	0
	1 to 2 years (16*)	50	6	25	19
	2 to 5 years (19)	63	5	26	5
	5+ years (94)	15	6	73	5
Contract type	Employed directly (58)	38	5	53	3
	Self-employed (77)	21	6	64	9
<i>Unweighted bases in parentheses</i>					

Q9

\* Caution: low base

One in five (21%) of all construction workers in Northern Ireland have received formal training designed to improve managerial or supervisory knowledge or skills, similar to the 19% who had in 2018/19, and somewhat lower than the UK average of 33%. Among those who have or have had some form of supervisory or management responsibilities, nearly half

(47%) have received formal training, fewer than in 2018/19 (61%) and 2015 (59%), and compared to the UK average (80%).

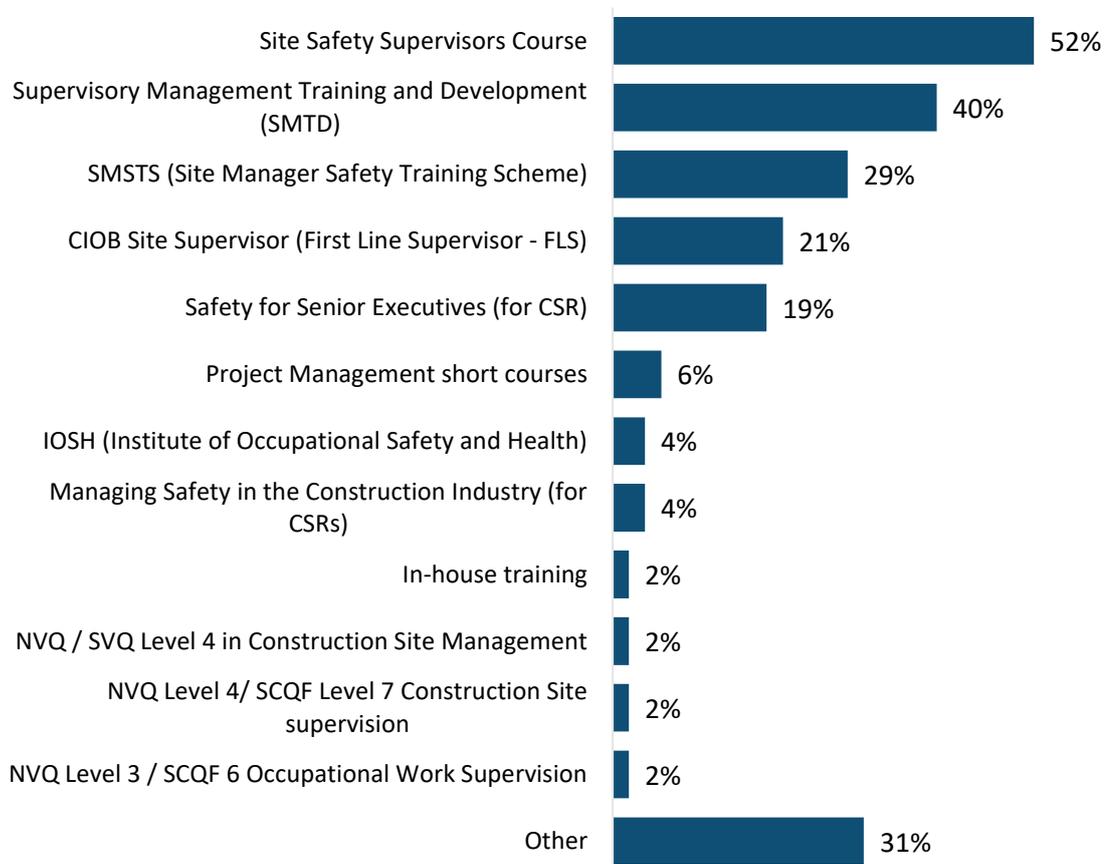
The proportion that has undertaken any managerial or supervisory training is higher amongst those that have worked in construction for at least 5 years than those that have worked in the sector for less time (23%, compared to 13% for those who have worked in the sector less than 5 years).

Construction workers employed directly are also more likely than average to have received formal training in this area (27%, compared to 17% of the self-employed). All site managers (75%) have received formal training designed to improve managerial or supervisory knowledge or skills.

In terms of the types of supervisory/managerial training undertaken, Site Safety Supervisors Courses (52%), Supervisory Management Training (40%), SMSTS (Site Manager Safety Training Scheme) (29%) are most frequently mentioned by those who have undertaken any training, followed by CIOB Site Supervisor training (21%). In-house training was the most frequently mentioned in 2018/19, but this year was much less common (2%, compared to 45%).

**Figure 28: Types of managerial/supervisory training undertaken**

*Base: Where received formal training designed to improve managerial or supervisory knowledge or skills*



Q11. Unweighted base = 48

### Overall skill levels

An overview of the qualification and skill levels of construction workers surveyed has been derived by combining data from various separate measures and is presented in Figure 29 below.

The vast majority of construction workers in Northern Ireland have a skills card/certificate, but few had a construction-related qualification or were working towards a qualification at the point of interview: only 3% of those interviewed had neither a skills card/certificate or construction qualification.

The proportion of construction workers in Northern Ireland who hold a skill card/certificate, but has no other construction qualification has increased to 96% from 37% in 2018/19 and 42% in 2015.

**Figure 29: Qualification status summary**

*Base: All respondents*

	<b>NI 2022 %</b>	<b>NI 2018/19 %</b>	<b>NI 2015 %</b>	<b>NI 2012 %</b>	<b>UK 2022 %</b>
Holds a formal construction qualification or a skills card/certificate or working towards a qualification	97	98	93	100	96
Holds a formal construction qualification or a skills card/certificate	97	98	93	100	96
Holds a skills card/certificate	97	97	90	100	93
Holds a skills card/certification but no other qualification	96	37	42	67	19
Working towards a qualification	1	12	7	6	13
<i>Unweighted bases</i>	<i>226</i>	<i>155</i>	<i>274</i>	<i>406</i>	<i>3,005</i>

*Q12/Q15/Q16/Q18*

## Geographic mobility

This section of the report on geographic mobility helps to identify which regions/nations of the UK are net ‘importers’ or ‘exporters’ of construction workers, as well as which elements of the construction workforce are the most mobile (based on region/nation of residence, region/nation of birth and type of contract). The measures included in this section are:

- reasons for working in current location
- comparisons of current location with workers’ region/nation of origin
- proportion of construction workers’ career that has been spent working in the current region/nation
- whether workers commute daily to their current site or whether temporary accommodation is used
- miles travelled to site each day
- whether their next site will be in commuting distance or will require temporary accommodation

## Work history in the current region/nation

All workers were asked what made them decide to work in the region/nation that they are currently working in.

The vast majority in Northern Ireland stated that they grew up there/always lived there (92%). This is much higher than the UK average (46%), and no other reason is anywhere near as significant amongst those interviewed.

**Figure 30: Reasons for choosing to work in current location – prompted, multiple response**  
Base: All respondents

	NI 2022 %	NI 2018/19 %	NI 2015 %	UK 2022 %
Employer sent you here	2	32	29	47
You grew up here/have always lived here	92	70	65	46
Family reasons	7	12	12	5
Came to the area to take up this or another job	2	3	2	5
Construction work is better paid in this area	4	1	<0.5	4
There are more jobs available in this area	4	4	4	3
<i>Unweighted bases</i>	226	155	274	3,005

Q28

Approaching two-fifths (38%) of construction workers in Northern Ireland have worked within their current region for their whole career, returning this near to the level seen in 2015 (45%) following an increase in 2018/19 (57%), but lower than the UK average in 2022 (49%).

Half (51%) have worked in their current region for most of their career, meaning that 89% have remained in Northern Ireland for all or most of their career, in line with previous years (91% in 2018/19 and 81% in 2015), and higher than the UK average (83%).

Unsurprisingly the proportion of workers who have spent all of their time in the current region/nation is higher among 16 to 24 year olds (82%) than amongst workers aged 25 and over (30%).

**Figure 31: Proportion of construction workers' career worked in current region/nation**

*Base: All respondents*

	<b>NI 2022 %</b>	<b>NI 2018/19 %</b>	<b>NI 2015 %</b>	<b>NI 2012 %</b>	<b>UK 2022 %</b>
All of your time	38	57	45	73	49
Most of it	51	34	36	19	34
Around half your time	10	3	8	4	8
A small proportion of your time	<0.5	3	8	2	5
Only on this job (this is the first site you've been to in this region/nation)	<0.5	1	1	0	1
Don't know	0	1	2	1	3
<i>Unweighted bases</i>	<i>226</i>	<i>155</i>	<i>274</i>	<i>406</i>	<i>3,005</i>

*Q26/Q27*

All construction workers in Northern Ireland indicate their employer operates nationwide, with just very small minorities (no more than 1%) reporting that their employer operates in particular parts of the UK including Northern Ireland, while 22% report that their employer also operates elsewhere in Europe (including the Republic of Ireland) and 4% outside of Europe.

## Region/nation worked in before current site

Thinking about the last construction site they worked on before their current one, in the majority of cases, workers' last sites are in the same region/nation as they are working in now. However, the extent to which this is the case varies considerably by region/nation, as Figure 32 illustrates.

Similarly to 2018/19 and 2015, construction workers in Northern Ireland are among the most likely to state that their last site was in the same region (85%), but the proportion is slightly lower than in 2018/19 (93%) but similar to 2015 (86%).

### Figure 32 Region/nation currently working in compared with the region/nation of workers' immediately previous construction sites

Base: Where had previous job(s) \*denotes less than 0.5%

Region/nation of last site	Region/nation currently working in											
	EM %	EE %	GL %	NE %	NW %	NI %	SC %	SE %	SW %	WA %	WM %	YH %
East Midlands (EM)	51	6	*	6	1	0	0	1	0	1	9	5
East of England (EE)	5	66	1	0	*	0	*	5	2	1	6	2
London (GL)	3	10	81	1	1	0	0	12	1	2	4	2
North East (NE)	1	4	0	65	1	0	1	2	1	1	*	1
North West (NW)	2	0	1	8	87	0	*	4	0	0	8	13
South East (SE)	6	10	11	0	1	1	0	66	3	2	1	1
South West (SW)	*	2	1	0	0	0	0	5	84	6	0	1
West Midlands (WM)	13	1	0	10	5	0	0	5	1	3	66	3
Yorkshire & Humber (YH)	15	1	0	10	2	*	0	*	1	0	2	72
Northern Ireland (NI)	1	0	0	0	0	85	0	0	0	0	0	0
Scotland (SC)	1	0	*	0	0	1	98	0	0	0	1	0
Wales (WA)	0	1	0	0	*	0	0	*	3	84	1	1
Republic of Ireland	0	0	*	0	0	13	0	0	0	0	*	0
Other parts of Europe	0	0	1	0	1	0	*	*	0	0	0	0
Outside of Europe	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	*	1	0	0	0
Other / Unsure	1	0	3	0	*	0	0	1	5	1	2	1
<i>Unweighted Bases</i>	216	183	392	195	252	226	226	264	183	193	290	184

Q32

## Worker origins

Workers were asked which region/nation they were living in just before they got their first job in construction in the UK.

Again, similarly to 2018/19 and 2015, construction workers in Northern Ireland are among the most likely to be interviewed in the same region/nation in which they were living when they started their construction career (92%), and this proportion is slightly lower than in 2018/19 (95%) and 2015 (97%).

### Figure 33: Region/nation currently working in compared with workers' region/nation of residence prior to first starting work in construction

Base: All respondents \*denotes less than 0.5%

Original home	Region/nation currently working in											
	EM %	EE %	GL %	NE %	NW %	NI %	SC %	SE %	SW %	WA %	WM %	YH %
East Midlands (EM)	53	5	1	7	*	0	0	1	*	1	5	5
East of England (EE)	7	67	5	0	0	0	0	3	1	*	6	1
London (GL)	2	13	64	1	*	1	0	14	3	1	1	4
North East (NE)	2	3	*	67	3	0	1	1	*	*	*	0
North West (NW)	1	0	1	6	89	0	0	4	*	1	6	13
South East (SE)	3	7	10	*	*	0	0	64	3	*	2	1
South West (SW)	*	*	1	*	0	*	0	5	81	3	*	0
West Midlands (WM)	13	1	1	8	4	*	0	4	*	0	74	1
Yorkshire & Humber (YH)	15	2	1	8	2	*	0	0	0	0	2	75
Northern Ireland (NI)	1	0	*	0	0	92	0	*	0	0	0	0
Scotland (SC)	1	0	1	1	*	0	94	1	*	0	1	1
Wales (WA)	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	*	5	90	2	0
Republic of Ireland	*	0	*	0	*	4	2	*	0	0	*	0
Other parts of Europe	1	0	7	*	*	2	3	2	*	1	*	0
Outside of Europe	0	1	3	*	0	*	*	*	*	0	*	1
Other / Unsure	*	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0
<i>Unweighted Bases</i>	232	202	443	206	271	226	233	283	201	202	306	200

Q40

## Travel to site

### Location of current workplace in relation to the location of workers' current homes

The majority (92%) of construction workers in Northern Ireland were interviewed on a site that was located within the same region/nation as their permanent home, but this is less likely to be the case than in 2018/19 (100%) and 2015 (99%), although higher than the UK average in 2022 (85%).

The remainder (8%) preferred not to give this information - *so while we cannot be sure, in all likelihood the proportion this year will be 100%*.

### Furthest distance worked in last 12 months

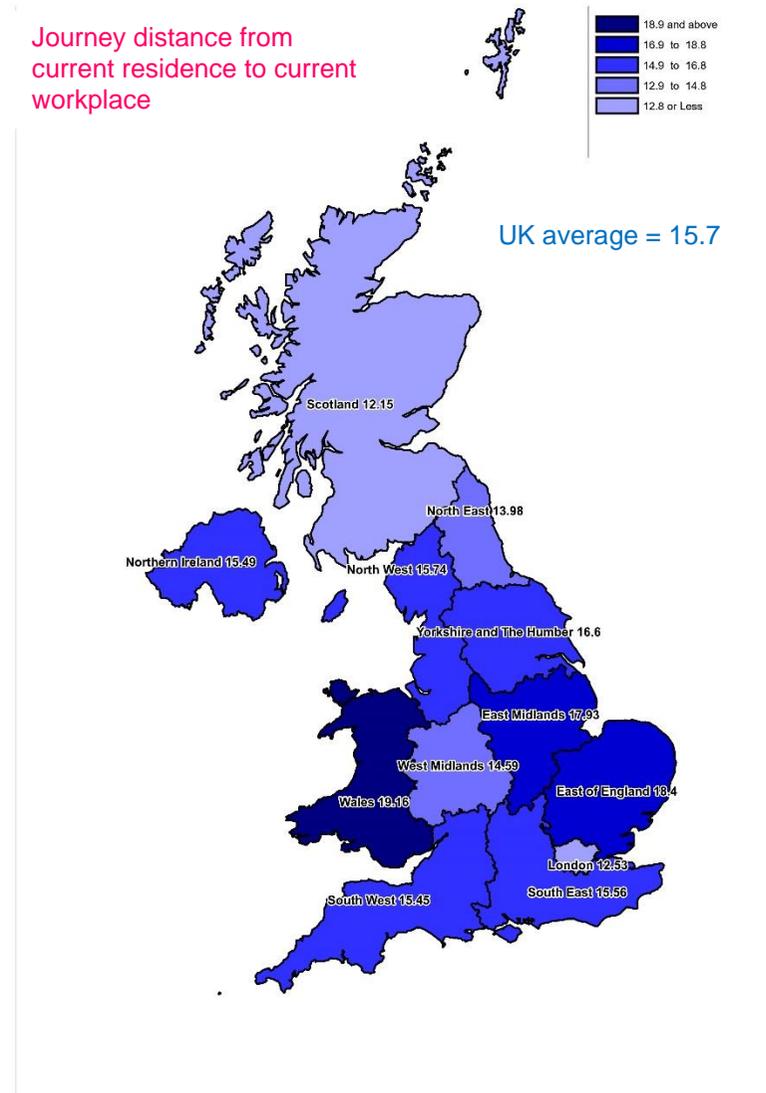
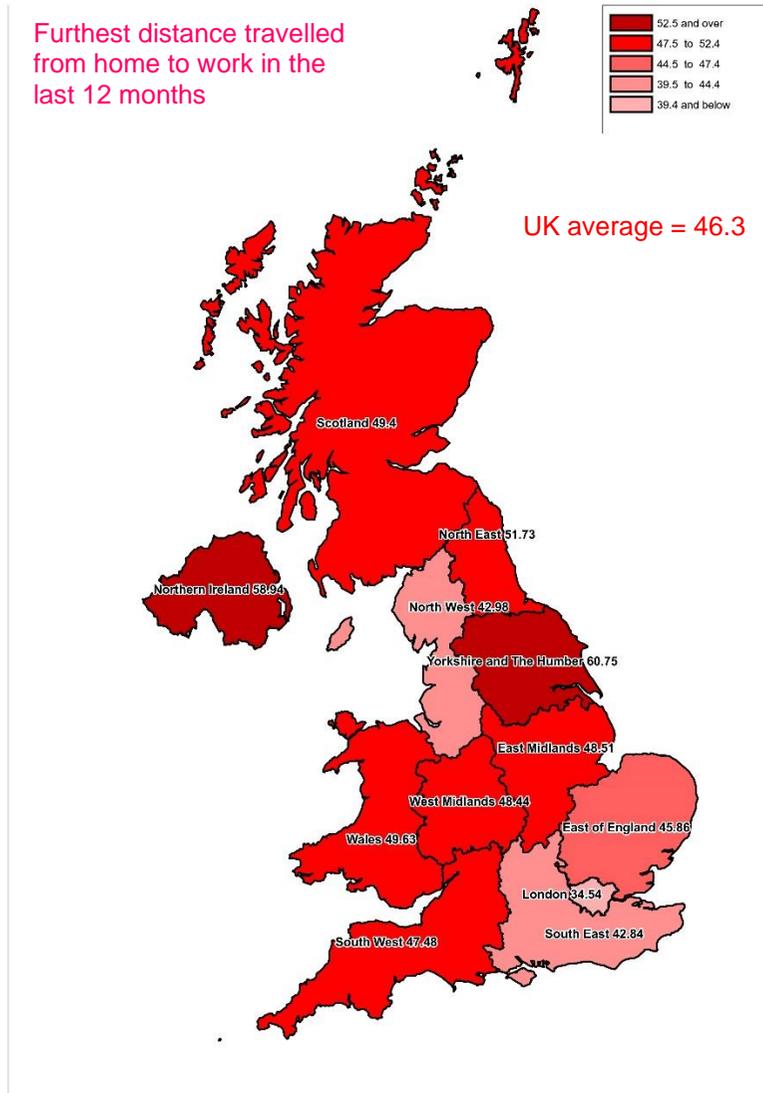
All workers were asked to indicate the furthest distance they have worked from their permanent or current home in the last 12 months.

A fifth (21%) of construction workers in Northern Ireland have worked no more than 20 miles away, which is lower than in 2018/19 (33%) and 2015 (24%) and also somewhat lower than the UK average in 2022 of 33%.

A third (31%) have worked between 21 and 50 miles away, a higher proportion than in 2018/19 (26%) and 2015 (18%), but similar to the UK average in 2022 of 34%.

This leaves nearly half (47%) who have worked more than 50 miles away from their permanent or current home – which is higher than the UK average (32%), including 21% who have worked more than 100 miles away (12% across the UK). This compares to 39% and 14% respectively in 2018/19, so there has been an increase in the proportion who have travelled over 100 miles, contrary to the downward trend across the UK (41% and 17% respectively in 2018/19 across the UK).

The average furthest distance travelled is 59 miles in Northern Ireland, higher than the UK average of 46 miles.



### Use of temporary accommodation

Just 1% of Northern Ireland construction workers surveyed are staying in temporary accommodation while working at their current site. This compares to 5% nationally, and is slightly lower than in previous years (3% in both 2018/19 and 2015).

### Journey distance to work

The average (mean) distance from workers' current residence (taking into account temporary residences) to their current site is 15 miles, continuing the downward trend since 2015 (18 miles in 2018/19 and 30 miles in 2015).

This (slight) downward trend is also reflected in the national picture, where the average distance is 17 miles, down on 18 miles in 2018/19, 22 miles in 2015 and 28 miles in 2012.

More than two-fifths (43%) of those providing a response travel less than 10 miles to work (as in 2018/19), more than half (55%) travel between 10 and 49 miles (as in 2018/19), and the remaining 3% travel further than this (again, as in 2018/19).

### Expected site/phase duration

All the workers in Northern Ireland who are currently employed on a temporary basis (43% of all construction workers) were asked how much longer they expect to be working for the company/person/agency paying them.

Responses range from 1% who expect to work for another week, 9% expecting another two to four weeks, a fifth (21%) for one to six months, a similar proportion (22%) six to twelve months, and more than two-fifths (44%) more than a year (which compares to 25% in 2018/19). There is a higher degree of longer-term certainty among workers in Northern Ireland than in 2018/19, as just 3% do not know how long they will be working for the company/person/agency paying them, compared to 38% in 2018/19, and compared to the UK average of 32%.

In order to get a measure of workplace stability amongst all construction workers, all respondents, whether temporary or permanent, were asked to indicate how long in total they expect to work at that specific site during this phase.

Overall, 15% of construction workers in Northern Ireland do not expect to work on that site for more than a month, returning this to the levels seen in 2015 (19%) after a significant drop in 2018/19 (3%). Just 2% believe they will be there for less than a week (compared to none in 2018/19).

Two in five (40%) anticipate being on site for more than a month but less than a year, slightly lower than in 2018/19 (44%), but considerably lower than the UK average of 53%.

More than two in five (44%) expect to be on site for more than a year, an increase on the quite consistent levels in previous surveys (28% in 2015; 30% in 2018/19), and higher than the UK average of 13%.

Just 2% are uncertain in this regard, much lower than in 2018/19 (23%) and the UK average in 2022 (22%).

Bricklayers and site managers are more likely than average to expect to work for more than a year at that site (55% and 54% respectively), while labourers/general operatives and plant/machine operatives are more likely than average to expect to work for between a month and a year (53% and 52% respectively).

**Figure 34: Length of time workers expect to work at that specific site during current phase**

Base: All respondents

	NI 2022 %	NI 2018/19 %	UK 2022 %
Less than a week	2	0	2
1-2 weeks	4	1	3
2-3 weeks	4	1	3
3-4 weeks	5	1	4
1-3 months	4	4	11
3-6 months	15	12	17
6-12 months	21	28	25
More than a year	44	30	13
Don't know	2	23	22
<i>Unweighted bases</i>	<i>226</i>	<i>155</i>	<i>3,005</i>

Q24

**Expected next site location**

Among construction workers in Northern Ireland who took part in the survey, 38% were confident that when they finish this job they will get a job that allows them to travel from their permanent home to work on a daily basis. This is a significantly lower proportion than in previous surveys (86% in 2018/19, 68% in 2015 and 79% in 2012), as well as much lower than the UK average in 2022 (69%).

None are sure that this will not be the case (compared to 3% in 2018/19), while the proportion who say it depends where the work is has increased significantly, from 5% in 2018/19 to 62% in the latest survey. There was an increase in this across the UK overall but to a much lesser extent (from 8% in 2018/19 to 20% in 2022).

Less than 1% do not know.

## Sub-sector and sector mobility

This final section of the report explores sub-sector mobility (movement between project types within the construction sector) and how this varies between different groups of construction workers. Attitudes towards future employment in the sector are also examined.

### Sub-sector mobility

All workers were asked which (if any) of six types of construction work they have undertaken for a continuous period of at least 3 months.

The pattern of response is similar to that in 2018/19, with new housing continuing to be the most common type of construction work undertaken (97%, compared to 85%), followed by public non-housing work (81%, compared to 61%), commercial work (79%, compared to 50%), housing repair and maintenance (79%, compared to 47%), private industrial work (79%, compared to 41%).

Off-site manufacturing is included in the survey for the first time in 2022, and a third of construction workers in Northern Ireland have spent at least 3 months undertaking this type of work.

In terms of the number of types of work undertaken, workers in Northern Ireland are more likely than the UK average to have undertaken multiple types of work, with 39% having undertaken 5 or 6 types of work, compared to the UK average of 15%. Within Northern Ireland, just 12% have undertaken one type, 6% two types, 11% three or four types, compared to 42%, 17% and 22% respectively across the UK.

The likelihood that workers have worked only on one project type declines as age increases, as one would expect (from 45% of 16 to 24 year olds to 5% of 45+ year olds).

Correspondingly, the likelihood that workers have worked on five or six project types increases with age (from 27% of those aged 16 to 24, to 37% of those aged 45 or over).

By current trade/occupation, carpenters/joiners (50%) and bricklayers (48%) are more likely than average to have worked on five or six project types.

**Figure 35: Type of projects on which workers have spent significant periods of time**  
**Base: All respondents**

	<b>NI 2022 %</b>	<b>NI 2018/19 %</b>	<b>NI 2015 %</b>	<b>NI 2012 %</b>	<b>UK 2022 %</b>
New housing	97	85	61	85	78
Public non-housing work such as schools, sports facilities, landscaping	81	61	56	82	32
Commercial work such as shops, office, pubs etc	79	50	44	75	39
Housing repair and maintenance including extensions/loft conversions	79	47	34	76	42
Private industrial work such as factories, warehousing, mechanical engineering, land reclamation	79	41	44	77	35
Infrastructure building projects, such as road/rail/airport, sewerage/water treatment, power stations	56	38	27	66	23
Off-site manufacturing	34	-	-	-	6
ONE TYPE ONLY	12	21	34	0	42
TWO TYPES	6	19	17	12	17
THREE TYPES	5	16	15	8	13
FOUR TYPES	6	15	16	7	9
FIVE TYPES	17	14	8	6	9
SIX TYPES	22	14	8	9	6
<i>Unweighted bases</i>	<i>226</i>	<i>155</i>	<i>274</i>	<i>406</i>	<i>3,005</i>

Q4

## Leaving the sector

In order to assess the potential outflow from the sector in the next five years (led by worker preference), all workers were asked how likely it is that in 5 years' time they will still want to be working in construction.

More than four-fifths (82%) of construction workers in Northern Ireland think it is likely that they will still want to do so, including 52% who say they definitely will be, and 30% who think it is very likely. This is the same as the UK average of 82%.

Just 1% say it is unlikely that they will still want to work in construction in five years' time (compared to a UK average of 7%), with a further 7% hoping to be retired by then.

Age is the predominant factor in this respect. Most obviously, the proportion that hopes to be retired in five years' time increases to 13% of construction workers aged 45 and over. The proportion that felt they *definitely* will still want to work in the construction sector in five years decreases with age from 68% of those aged 16 to 19, to 45% of those aged 45 or over.

**Figure 36: Likelihood of construction workers still wanting to be working in the construction sector in five years' time**

*Base: All respondents*

	All %	Age %			
		16 - 19	20 - 24	25 - 44	45+
Definitely will be	52	68	50	58	45
Very likely	30	32	38	29	30
Quite likely	7	0	13	7	7
Quite unlikely	1	0	0	0	2
Very unlikely	0	0	0	0	0
Definitely will not be	1	0	0	1	1
Hope to be retired	7	0	0	1	13
Don't know	2	0	0	4	2
<i>Unweighted bases</i>	226	19*	16*	83	108

Q38A

\* *Caution: low base*

Excluding those aged 60 and over (as those over 60 may be assumed to be considering retirement in the next 5 years): 56% believe they will definitely want to be working in the construction sector, 32% believe it is very likely they will want to be working in the construction sector, and 6% believe it is quite likely they will want to be working in the construction sector. Overall, 87% of this group are likely to some degree to want to be working in the sector, similar to the 86% who did so in 2018/19. Just 1% of this age group think it unlikely they will want to be working in the construction sector in five years (compared to 6% in 2018/19).

## The construction workforce in Northern Ireland - 2022 summary

### The UK construction industry

Across the UK, the survey findings point us towards the conclusion that the construction industry is not in a particularly dynamic phase.

Following the sharp dip in industry output in value terms during the worst months of the Covid pandemic, there was a very sharp recovery from April to June 2021 followed by more steady growth to a point where output is broadly at its pre-pandemic level. Low growth is anticipated in the near future, with a relatively high rate of inflation and increases in the base interest rate likely to increase costs and dampen demand.

Correspondingly, the industry's workforce which suffered minor decline in 2020/2021 is also anticipated to be fairly static in aggregate with the major labour and skills driver being a need to recruit around 200,000 new workers per year as a result of an industry 'churn rate', estimated at around 8% of a 2.6 million total workforce, rather than substantial change in the total workforce (*The Skills Construction Needs*, Construction Skills Network, CITB, January, 2023).

### Stability within the construction industry in Northern Ireland

However, a substantial proportion of industry workers, as surveyed here, have been in the industry for lengthy periods. Across the UK around 70% of workers have worked in the industry for 5 years or more (80% within Northern Ireland), and this reflects findings from previous surveys. Demographic and other characteristics of the workforce therefore change little overall, and with only 7% of workers (8% in Northern Ireland) expecting to leave construction in the next 5 years, changes to the demography of the workforce can occur only at the margin. A doubling of the percentage of female or ethnic minority entrants would have only a minor effect on the overall structure of the workforce.

The structure of the workforce remains – and is set to remain in the near future - very substantially white and male in its composition, particularly as, in this case, the 'workforce' was defined as comprising on-site and predominantly manual staffing, largely excluding clerical, administrative, technical, and professional construction occupations in which women, particularly, are more strongly represented.

The occupational profile of the workforce as identified by the survey also remains unchanged from previous years with labourers, bricklayers, site managers, carpenters, and plant operators remaining most frequent followed by much lower levels of representation of other industry trades.

Where survey respondents reported that they had changed roles within the industry, the distribution of prior occupations broadly reflects the current distribution of occupations in the workforce as a whole. Aspirations to a different future occupation are infrequent, as

only 7% of workers across the UK – and just 2% of workers within Northern Ireland - want to change their occupation.

### Some indicators of change

Across the UK a further area of observed stability includes broad measures of qualification and training. For example, around seven in ten workers hold a construction-related qualification, 13% are working towards a qualification and 33% have had supervisory or management training. All these figures are broadly similar to those observed in 2018/19.

However, this survey of construction workers highlighted very low levels of construction-related qualifications within Northern Ireland. This differs from previous surveys to such an extent that we should treat this data with caution and look at other sources of comparison to validate the findings. There is a very high level of possession of skills cards/certification across the Northern Ireland construction workforce, and this suggests that these may stand in for qualifications for many.

Across the UK overall there appears to be greater reticence in taking on more responsibility this year than previously, with fewer respondents certain they want to become a supervisor or manager in the future (23% across the UK; compared to 30% in 2018/19), but this is not reflected in Northern Ireland, where workers are keener to take on this responsibility than the UK average in 2022 and compared with previously (34% in Northern Ireland; 26% in 2018/19). Again, across the UK, fewer workers than in 2018/19 have had formal training in managerial or supervisory knowledge or skills (28%, compared to 35%), reflecting their lower level of interest this year in moving into management and supervisory posts (or perhaps lower levels of interest in these roles are due to less formal training being offered in this area?), but this is not evident within Northern Ireland, where levels of formal training in managerial or supervisory knowledge or skills are lower than average but slightly higher than previously (21%, compared to 19% in 2018/19).

While the proportion of workers holding industry Skills Cards is still high, it has fallen somewhat since 2018/19, from 97% to 93% across the UK, but in Northern Ireland there has been no change (97% in both years).

Since 2015 and 2018/19 surveys, within Northern Ireland (as across the UK) the proportion of direct employees in the workforces has decreased (from 64% in 2015, 52% in 2018/19 to 45% in 2022) while self-employment, always strong in the sector, has increased (33% in 2015, 46% in 2018/19, 55% in 2022). There is little change in the level of agency employment, which has tended to be lower than average in Northern Ireland in previous years. The increase in self-employment is likely to positively impact both employers - enabling increased flexibility and cost control – and workers - increased independence, but may also have a negative impact, with greater uncertainty and insecurity in the industry for workers. Potentially, this change may result in lower levels of employer-led training, and attention to improving the skills of the workforce. Very few workers in Northern Ireland are

working towards a qualification in 2022, and this proportion is unlikely to increase significantly in the context of growth in self-employment.

Another area of change identified by the survey concerns working hours. The proportion of workers working more than 50 hours per week has decreased somewhat since 2018/19 across the UK (24% to 19%), and also in Northern Ireland where it has tended to be lower than the UK average (9% to 5%). The change raises interesting questions as to whether some technological changes are permitting fewer but more productive hours for some workers; or whether workforce culture, in line with general trends since Covid, is disposing some workers to put personal time ahead of overtime hours; or, simply, whether demand pressures in the industry are lower.

While the survey identified that across the UK fewer workers are travelling long distances to work (32% had worked more than 50 miles from home in 2022, compared to 41% in 2018/19). There has been an increase in Northern Ireland in this respect: 47% of Northern Ireland workers had worked more than 50 miles from home in the last year, compared to 39% in 2018/19. However, the average travel distance to work in Northern Ireland was 15 miles in 2022 (18 miles in 2018/19), compared to 17 miles (18 miles in 2018/19) across the UK.

### **Focus on how Northern Ireland differs from the UK average**

Compared with the construction workforce across the UK as a whole, Northern Ireland stands out in several respects:

- Northern Ireland has an older workforce within construction than the UK average, with 12% aged 60 and over (6% across the UK), and workers are more likely to have worked in the industry for over 20 years (58%, compared to 30%)
- Northern Ireland has very low representation of ethnic minority groups both within the construction workforce (1%) but also within the 16-64 population as a whole (4%)
- Fewer construction workers in Northern Ireland than across the UK originate from another country (6%, compared to 17%), and workers from another country mainly originate from the Republic of Ireland. Nearly half the construction workers in Northern Ireland hold a passport for another country (48%), with most holding dual citizenship of the UK and the Republic of Ireland
- Workers in Northern Ireland are more likely than the UK average to be performing supervisory or management roles (40%, compared to 27%)
- At 55% the construction workforce in Northern Ireland has more self-employed staff than the UK average (42%)
- They are more likely than the UK average to be working on a temporary rather than a permanent basis (43%, compared to 29%)

- Northern Ireland has a higher proportion of construction workers who have worked pretty much continuously in the industry than the UK average (78%, compared to 61%)
- They are more likely than the UK average to have worked in more than one construction trade or occupation (54%, compared to 35%)
- Construction workers in Northern Ireland are less confident their counterparts across the UK of moving onto another job that allows them to travel from their permanent home to work on a daily basis (38% are confident, compared to a UK average of 69%)

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