

# Winter Skills Bulletin 2025

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Older Workers in Ireland  
Labour Market Perspective



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# 1. Introduction

Ireland has experienced a notable increase in its older population in recent years. Between April 2019 and April 2025, the number of persons aged 50-74 years grew by 18%, rising from 1.25m to 1.47m. Within this group, those aged 50-59 years increased by 102,300 (17%), while the 60-74 year age group grew by 120,800 (19%)<sup>1</sup>.

This demographic shift is reflected in the labour market. In quarter 1 2025, older workers accounted for over 30% of all employed persons aged 15-74 years, and Eurofound projects that their share will reach 32% by 2031<sup>2</sup>. In parallel, Ireland held the second-highest employment rate for older persons (aged 50-74 years) in the EU in quarter 1 2025. During this period, both male and female workers in Ireland tended to leave the labour market later than in most other EU countries<sup>3</sup>.

This report examines key labour market indicators for older workers aged 50-74 years in Ireland, focusing on national trends, variations across older workers age cohorts, and changes over time. The aim is to provide evidence to inform policy and support targeted interventions that sustain and enhance labour market participation among persons aged 50-74 years.

## 1.1 Data and definitions

The report focuses on labour market outcomes for older workers who are in employment or economically active. It examines changes between quarter 1 2019 and quarter 1 2025<sup>4</sup>, drawing on data from the Central Statistics Office (CSO)<sup>5</sup> and Eurostat.

International definitions of labour market cohorts vary, particularly in how older workers are classified. The age threshold for this group typically starts anywhere from 40 to 55-year-olds.

For the purpose of this report, **older workers are defined as those aged 50-74 years**, consistent with research that frames older workers as starting at the age 50 years<sup>6</sup>, as well as ageing studies such as The Irish Longitudinal Study on Ageing (TILDA)<sup>7</sup>.

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1 [Eurostat. \(2025, September 12\). Population in private households by citizenship and labour status - quarterly data](#)

2 [Eurofound \(2020\). Keeping older workers engaged: Country report - Ireland. Publications Office of the European Union.](#)

3 Ibid

4 Except lifelong learning data which is presented for Q2 2019 and Q2 2025.

5 The LFS data presented in this report is either extracted from the CSO's PxStat Open Data Statistical Database or is based on an analysis of strictly controlled Research Microdata Files provided by the CSO. The CSO does not take any responsibility for the views expressed or the outputs generated from this research.

6 [Centre for Ageing Better. \(2017\). What do older workers value?](#)

7 [Trinity College Dublin \(2022\). The Irish Longitudinal Study on Ageing \(TILDA\). \(n.d.\). Our Participants & Data Collection. Trinity College Dublin.](#)

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This analysis is provided by:

1. five-year age cohorts (50-54, 55-59, 60-64, 65-74 years)
2. broader groupings of 50-59-year-olds and 60-74 years
3. overall grouping of 50-74 years.

This approach allows for a more detailed view of age-specific patterns while also reflecting the way many analyses of older workers are structured. The inclusion of the 65-74 year age cohort reflects the growing presence of individuals aged over 64 years in the labour force in recent years.



## 2. Key findings

**838,800**

The number of persons aged 50-74 in employment (Q1 2025).

 **32%**

(+201,500) increase

since Q1 2019, compared to 21% for all employed persons aged 15-74.

### In quarter 1 2025



**Females accounted for 45% of older workers (aged 50-74 years).**



**15% of older workers (mostly males), have lower secondary education or less,** compared with 8% among all employed persons aged 15-74 years.



**Health, industry, wholesale & retail, education and agriculture** sectors combined employed over half of all older workers.



**54% of those employed in agriculture were aged 50-74 years,** and over half of these being aged 60-74 years.



**Almost 40% of older workers mainly or sometimes worked from home,** rising to 42% for those aged 50-59 years.



**24% of persons aged 50-74 years in employment work part-time;** this share rises to 46% for those aged 65-74 years.



**25% (210,700) of older workers were based in Dublin.**

The **Border and Midlands** regions had the **highest share of older workers** in their workforce, at 33%.



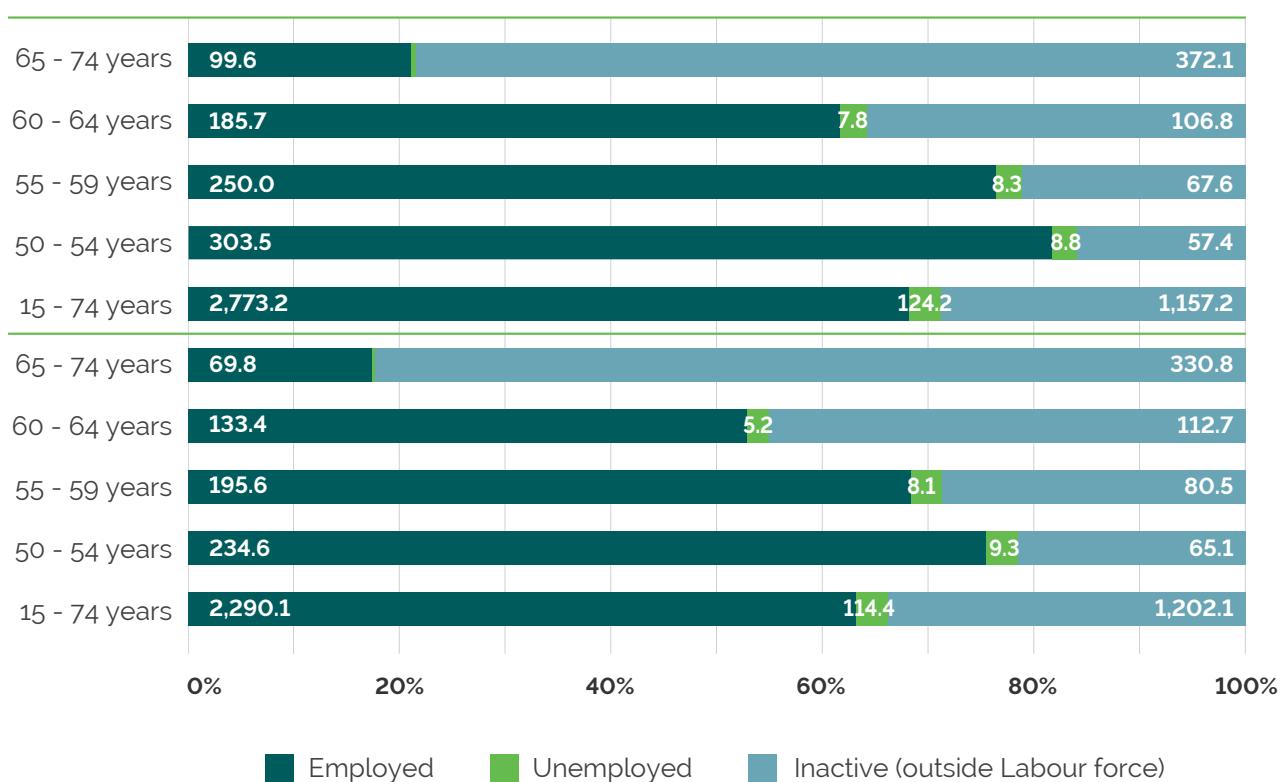
**12% of older workers participated in lifelong learning,** compared with 15% of all employed aged 25-74 years (based on Q2 2025 data).

### 3. Participation and labour force status

Figure 1 shows the labour market status of workers in Ireland by age group in quarter 1 2019 and quarter 1 2025. In quarter 1 2025, there were nearly 1.47 million persons aged 50-74 years in Ireland, up 18% from 1.25 million when compared to quarter 1 2019. However, at 865,500, the number of older persons who were labour force participants in quarter 1 2025 was 32% higher than in quarter 1 2019.

Although the number of labour force participants declines with age (Figure 1), there were nonetheless increases for each age group over the period quarter 1 2019 -quarter 1 2025. The largest increase was for the 50-54 year age cohort (+68,400 persons), but in relative terms, the increase was strongest for the oldest cohort, those aged 65-74 years, at 43%.

**Figure 1.** Labour force status (ooo's and %) by age cohort, quarter 1 2019 and quarter 1 2025



Source: SLMRU analysis of Eurostat data

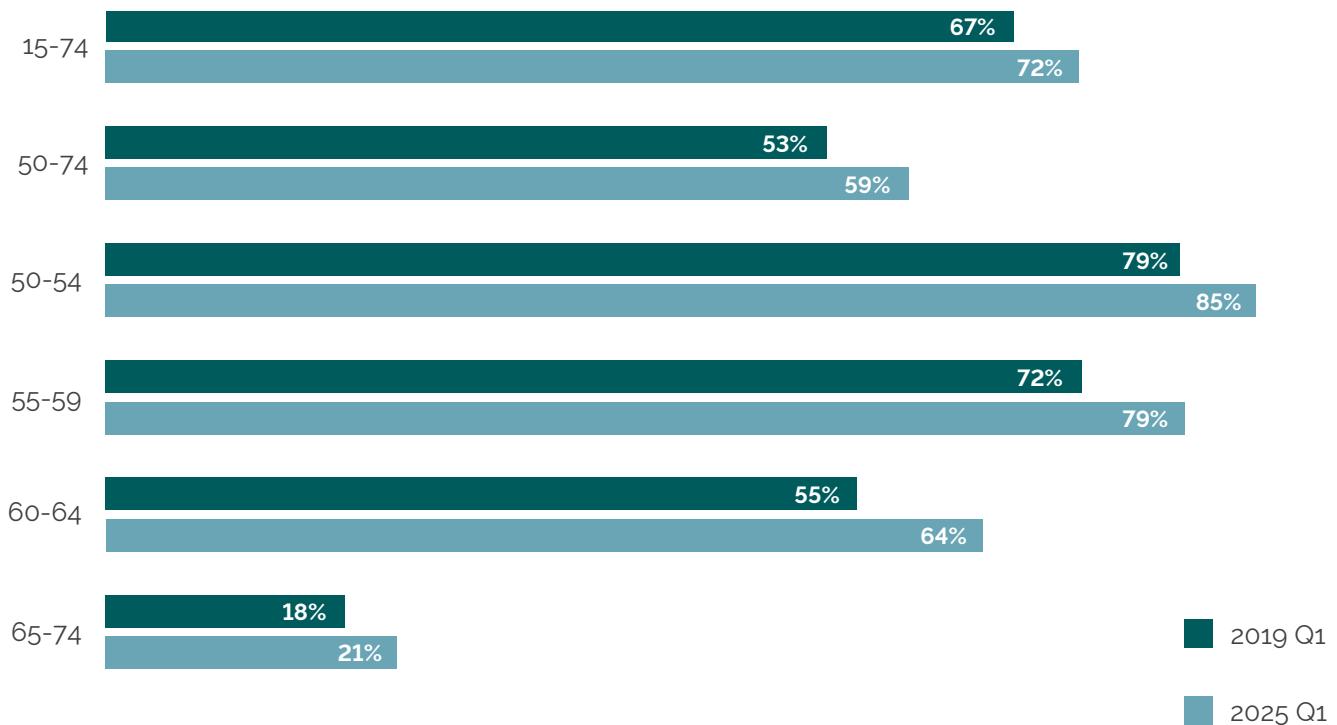
Note: Due to small sample size the data for unemployed 65-74-year-olds is not reported

Figure 2 shows labour force participation rates for older workers by age group. In general, amongst older workers, the older the age group, the lower the labour force participation rate: 85% of 50-54-year-olds were labour force participants in quarter 1 2025, compared to just 21% for 65-74-year-olds.

Between quarter 1 2019 and quarter 1 2025, the participation rate amongst older workers increased from 53% to 59%, with increases observed for each age cohort. The strongest relative gains in participation rates were observed among those aged 60-64 where participation grew by 9 percentage points (p.p.) from 55% to 64%.

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**Figure 2** Labour force participation rate by age (%) in quarter 1 2019 and quarter 1 2025



Source: SLMRU analysis of Eurostat data

While labour force participation among older persons was higher in quarter 1 2025 than in quarter 1 2019, only 59% of 50-74-year-olds in Ireland were within the labour force, which is 13 p.p. less than all persons aged 15-74. This was mainly driven by the 65-74-year-old cohort, where a large proportion (79%, or 372,100) were outside the labour force. By contrast, employment rates among those aged 50-59 were higher than the average for the total population aged 15-74, indicating stronger labour market engagement among the younger cohort of older workers.

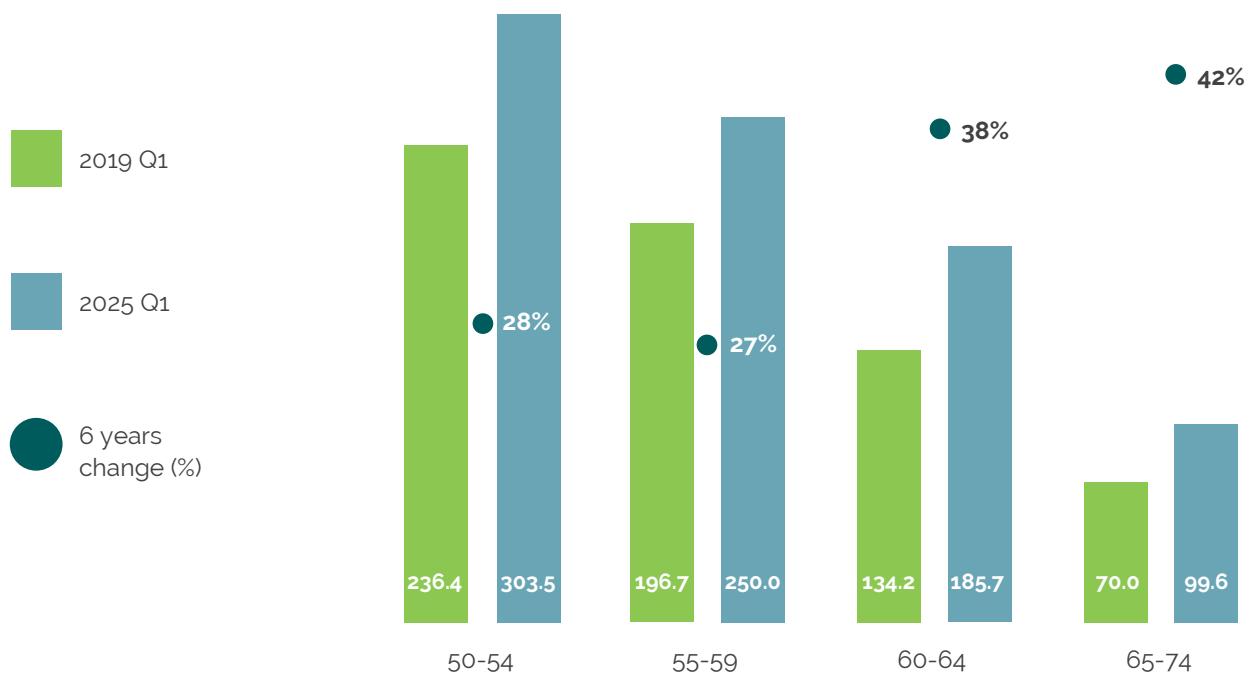
## 4. Employment

### 4.1 Employment by age

There were 838,800 older workers in Ireland in quarter 1 2025, representing 30% of total employment (aged 15-74 years). Amongst older workers, the largest group was those aged 50-54 years (303,500 persons), followed by those aged 55-59 years (250,000 persons) (Figure 3), which combined made up two thirds of the total cohort of older workers.

When compared to quarter 1 2019, the number of workers aged 50-74 years rose by 201,500 (or 32%), with their share of total employment increasing by over 2 p.p. from less than 28% in that period. While the largest absolute growth was observed for the 50-54 year-age cohort (+67,100), the largest relative growth, at 42% (+29,600), was for the 65-74-year-olds cohort, despite this being the smallest group in absolute terms.

**Figure 3** Employment for older workers aged 50-74 years (000's) and % change, quarter 1 2019-quarter 1 2025

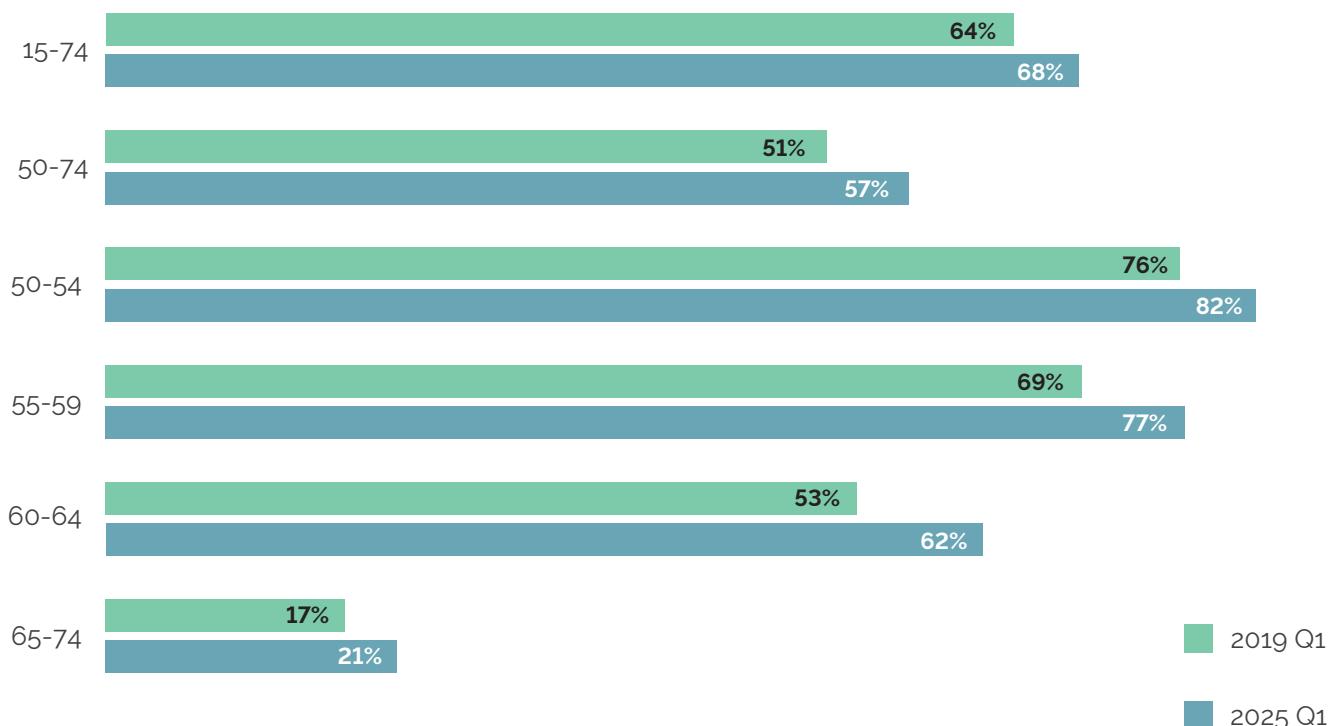


Source: SLMRU analysis of CSO data

The employment rate for older workers (aged 50-74 years) in quarter 1 2025 was 57%, noticeably lower than the national average of 68% for all workers aged 15-74 years (Figure 4). However, the rate varied significantly across older age cohorts: 82% for those aged 50-54 years, compared with only 21% for those aged 65-74 years.

In quarter 1 2025, the employment rate for older workers (aged 50-74 years) was 6 p.p. higher than in quarter 1 2019. Increases were recorded across all age cohorts, with the largest rise of 9 p.p. (to 62%) among those aged 60-64 years, and the smallest increase of 4 p.p. for the oldest group (65-74 years).

**Figure 4** Employment rates by age, quarter 1 2019-quarter 1 2025



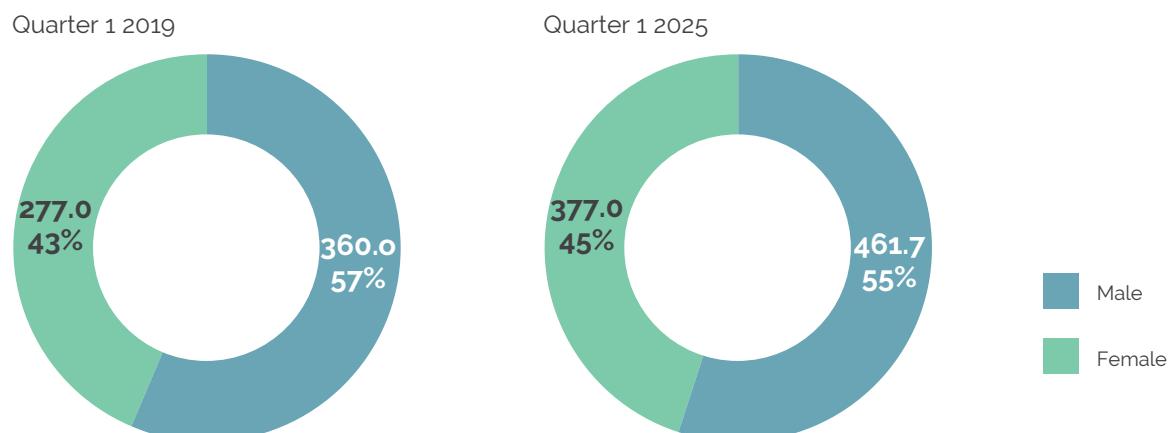
Source: SLMRU analysis of Eurostat data

## 4.2 Employment by sex

In quarter 1 2025, females made up 45% of older workers, totalling 377,000 persons (Figure 5). Although the absolute increase in numbers was similar for both sexes compared to quarter 1 2019, the growth rate for females was 36%, compared to 28% for males.

Although males continued to outnumber females, females represented an increasing share of older workers. In quarter 1 2025, the share of females increased by 2 pp compared to quarter 1 2019, with an additional 100,000 older females employed. This change in female employment was stronger among older workers than in the overall employed group aged 15 years or more, where the female share increased by just 1 p.p. to reach 47%, following a 24% (+ 254,900) rise in female employment.

**Figure 5** Employment number (in 000's) and share (%) of older workers by sex, quarter 1 2019 and quarter 1 2025



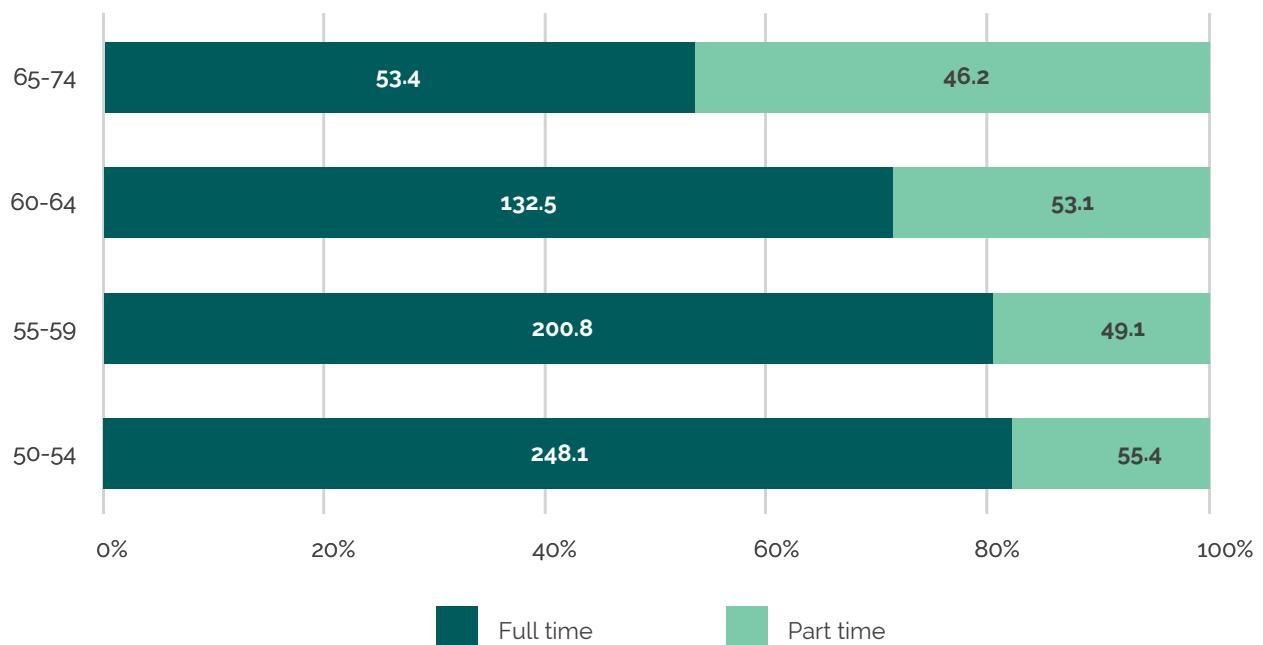
Source: SLMRU analysis of CSO data

The older the age cohort, the smaller the share of female workers. In quarter 1 2025, females accounted for 47% of those employed aged 50-54 years and 55-59 years (143,100 and 117,600 respectively), 45% of those aged 60-64 years (83,100), and 33% (33,200) of those aged 65-74 years.

### 4.3 Work patterns (FT/PT)

In quarter 1 2025, almost one quarter (203,900 persons or 24%) of older workers were working part-time, which is higher than the national average of 21% observed for total employment (aged 15+ years). The older the age cohort, the higher the share of part-time workers, ranging from 18% (or 55,400) for those aged 50-54 years to 46% (or 46,200) for the 65-74-year-old cohort (Figure 6).

**Figure 6** Number (ooo's) and share (%) of older workers working part-time by age, quarter 1 2025



Source: SLMRU analysis of CSO data

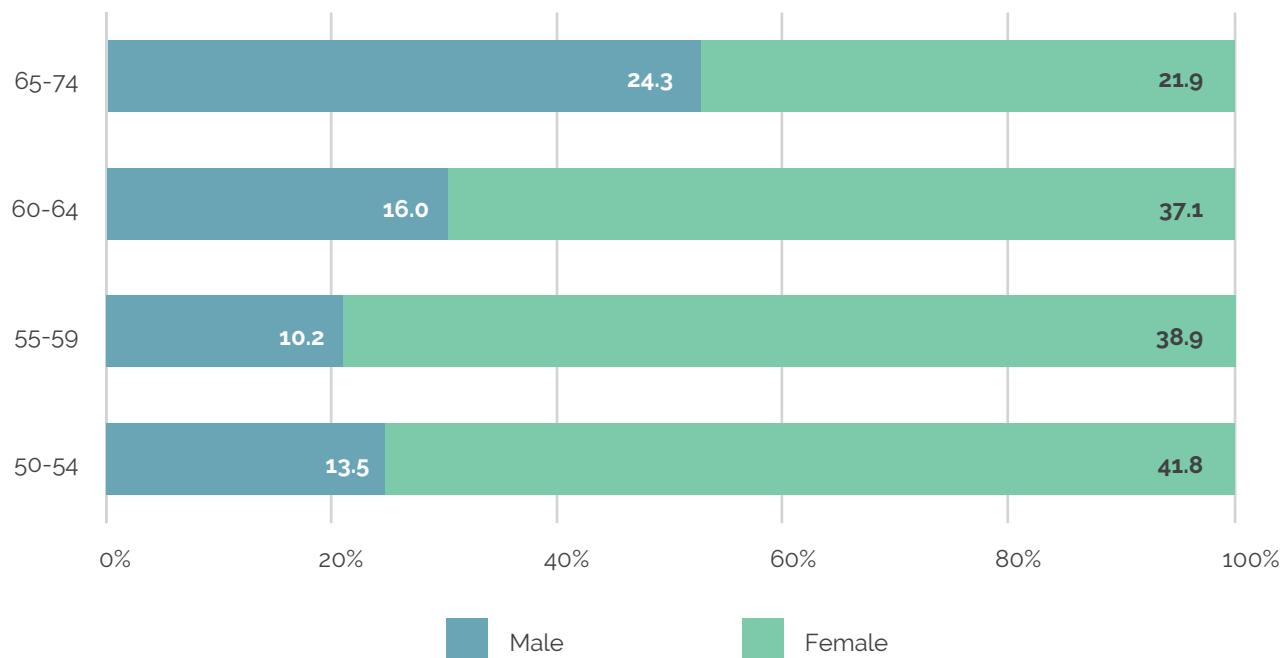
Note: No response is excluded from percentage calculation

Between quarter 1 2019 and quarter 1 2025, the proportion of older workers in part-time employment declined across nearly all age cohorts, except for those aged 65-74 years. In contrast, the share of part-time employment in overall employment (15 years +) increased slightly (from 20.6% to 21.2%) during the same period.

Figure 7 shows the distribution of male and female part-time workers by age group in quarter 1 2025. Female older workers were more likely than males to work part-time. This is particularly the case for those aged 55-59 years where females accounted for 79% of part-time employment. In the oldest age cohort (65-74 years) however, males accounted for the larger share of part-time workers, most likely related to those working in agricultural roles.

Between quarter 1 2019 and quarter 1 2025, the gap narrowed as the share of females working part-time decreased for almost all age cohorts, except those aged 65-74 years. For the overall 50-74 year age group, the female proportion of part-time workers fell by 3.5 p.p. Among males, a decrease in the share of part-time employment was recorded only for the 55-59 year age cohort (-2.2 p.p.), while other groups recorded a rise or no change at all, and the group as a whole saw an increase of 1.6 p.p.

**Figure 7** Number (ooo's) and share (%) of older workers working part-time by sex and age, quarter 1



Source: SLMRU analysis of CSO data

Note: No response is not included in percentage calculation

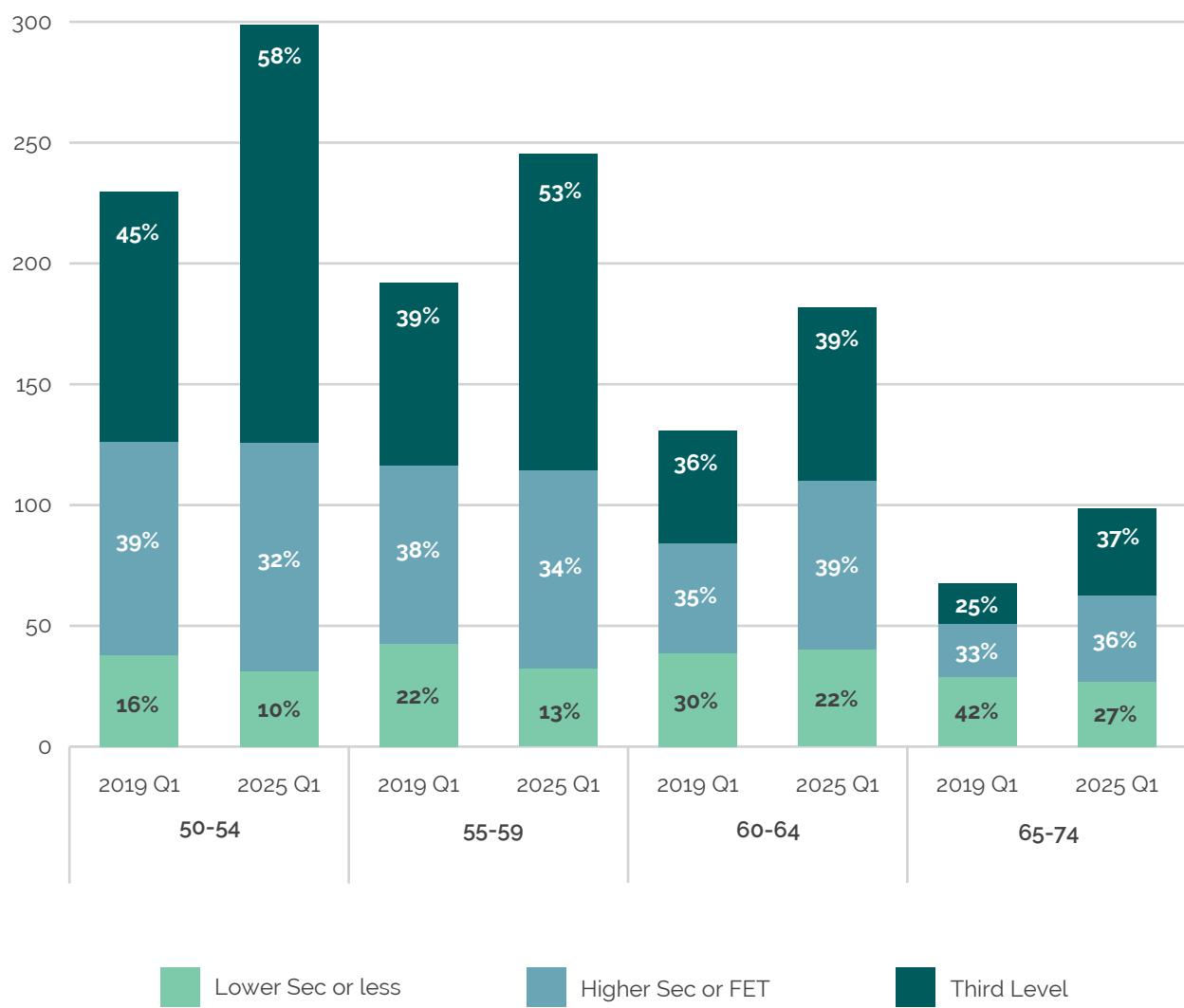
#### 4.4 Employment by education level

Older workers are more likely to have lower educational attainment, with 15% (129,800 persons) holding at most a lower secondary education or less in quarter 1 2025 - nearly double the national average of 8% for workers aged 15-74 years. In contrast, nearly half of older workers in Ireland held a third-level qualification, totalling 411,900 persons or 49%, while 34% (282,500) had attained higher secondary or FET education.

Compared to quarter 1 2019, employment shifted towards higher education levels across all cohorts of older workers, with third-level qualifications showing the strongest growth (Figure 8). Employment among workers aged 50-74 years with third-level qualifications increased by 70% (+169,300) over this time period. The largest rise in absolute numbers was recorded in the 50-54 age cohort, with an additional 69,700 persons, while the highest relative growth was observed among those aged 65-74 years, where the number of older workers holding third-level qualifications rose by 117% (+19,500).

Employment also grew among persons with higher secondary or FET qualifications, though the growth was less substantial than for the third-level qualification holders. In contrast, employment among persons with lower secondary education or less generally declined for older workers (-12%, or -17,700). The steepest fall was in the 55-59 year-age group (-25% or -10,500), although the 60-64 year-age cohort recorded a modest 4% increase (+1,400).

**Figure 8** Employment (000's and %) by education level and age, quarter 1 2019 and quarter 1 2025



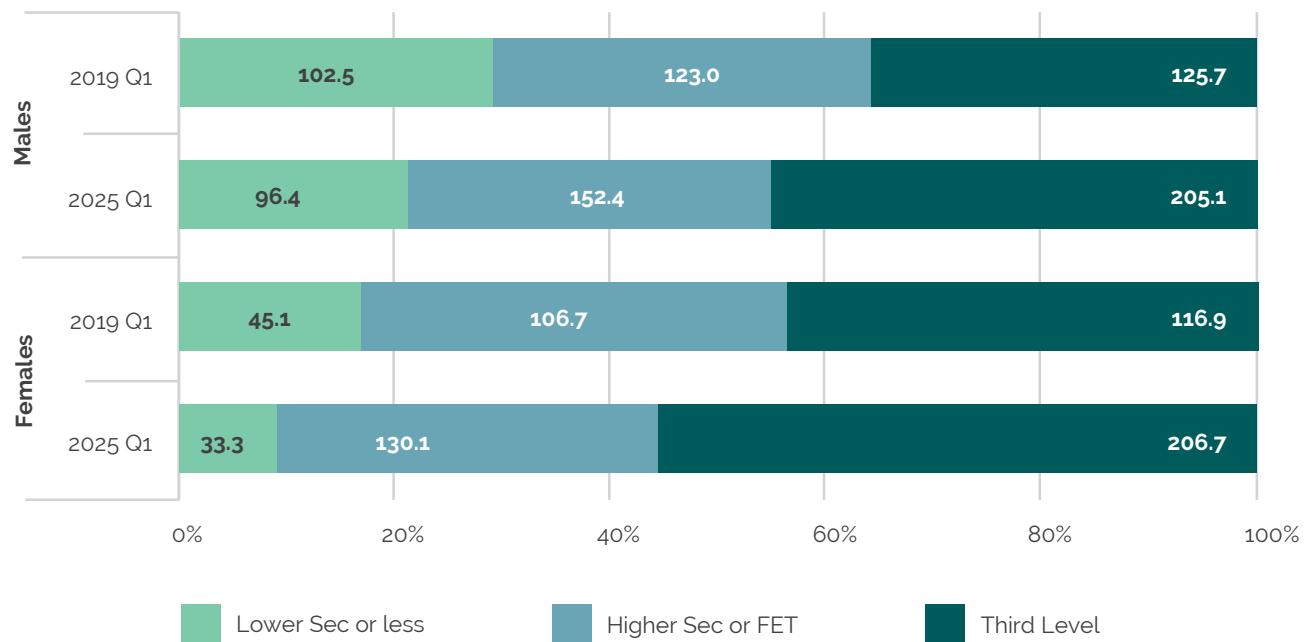
Source: SLMRU analysis of EUROSTAT data

Note: No response is not included in percentage calculation

Although the number of male and female older workers with third-level education was broadly similar (205,100 males compared to 206,700 females), third-level education holders made up 55% of employment amongst older females but just 45% of employment amongst older males (Figure 9). Between quarter 1 2019 and quarter 1 2025, females recorded the highest increase in employment for those with third-level qualifications, both in absolute terms (89,800 more older females compared to 79,400 more older males) and in relative terms (a 77% rise for females compared to 63% for males).

At 96,400 persons in quarter 1 2025 (Figure 9), the number of male older workers with lower secondary education attainment was nearly three times higher than the number of females (33,300). Nonetheless, over the period quarter 1 2019-quarter 1 2025, the number of older workers with lower secondary education or less declined across both sexes, with declines of 26% for females and 6% for males.

**Figure 9** Employment (000's and %) for older workers by highest education attainment and sex in quarter 1 2019 and quarter 1 2025



Source: SLMRU analysis of EUROSTAT data

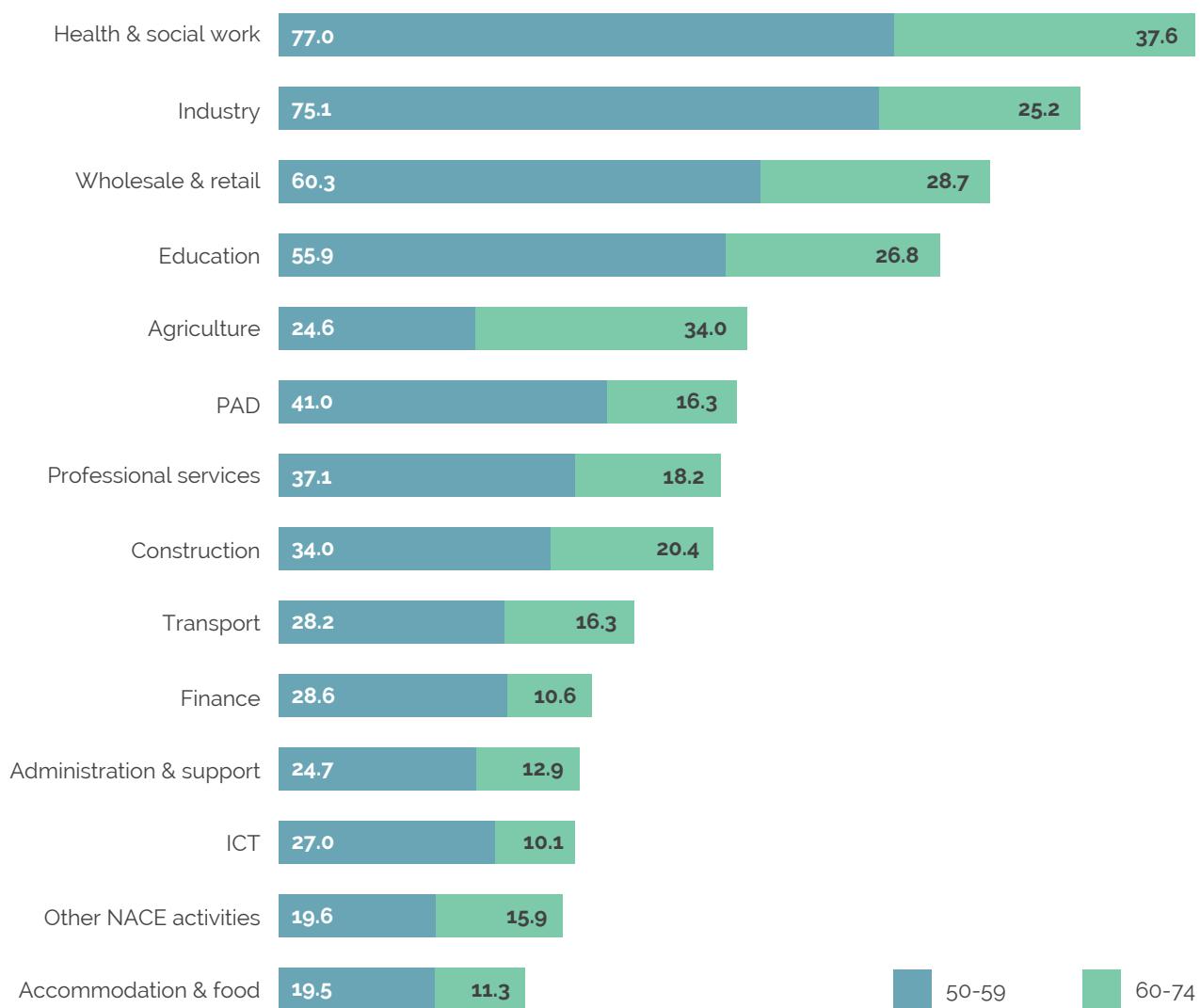
Note: No response is not included

This trend aligns with the broader employed population aged 15-74 years, where both sexes recorded an increase in the number and share of third-level educated workers, along with a decrease in those with lower secondary education or less. Among older workers, the rise in the number and share of third-level educated persons appears to be occurring more rapidly. The pace of increase is greater in the older age cohorts, although their overall share remains lower.

#### 4.5 Sectors employing older workers

Figure 10 shows employment of older workers by sector and age group in quarter 1 2025. More than a third (36%) of all older workers were employed in one of three sectors: health (114,500), industry (100,300), and wholesale/retail (89,000), although this share fell to 32% within the 65-74-year-old age group, partly because this older age group has a higher than average share in agriculture. Agriculture is the only sector where 65-74-year-olds outnumbered 50-59-year-olds (34,000 compared to 24,600 persons). Those aged 50-59 years accounted for the majority share of older workers in industry, finance and ICT (75%, 73%, and 73% respectively).

**Figure 10** Employment of older workers by sector (000's) and age group, quarter 1 2025



Source: SLMRU analysis of CSO data

Sectoral employment patterns differ by sex. Among females aged 50-74 years in quarter 1 2025, the largest shares were in health (24%, or 90,300), education (17%, or 62,300), and wholesale & retail (11%, or 41,600). For males, industry (16%, or 72,800), construction (11%, or 50,000), and agriculture (11%, or 49,400) were most prominent, with agriculture particularly significant among those aged 60-74 years.

Table 1 shows that several sectors employ a higher proportion of older workers (aged 50-74 years) than the overall average of 30% within total employment (15-74-year-olds). Agriculture stands out, with 54% of those employed in this sector aged 50-74 years in quarter 1 2025. Other sectors with above-average shares include transport (40%), public administration and defence (38%), and administrative and support services (34%).

Between quarter 1 2019 and quarter 1 2025, industry recorded the largest absolute increase in employment among older workers, with an additional 30,900 persons (+45%). Employment of older workers in the health sector increased by 25,000 (+28%), and the education sector added 22,000

older workers (+36%). The ICT sector, while starting from a small base, had the fastest percentage growth at 96%, but this resulted in just 18,200 additional older workers in employment.

The share of total sectoral employment who were older workers increased across most sectors between quarter 1 2019 and quarter 1 2025. The increases were most notable in industry, agriculture and administrative and support services. The share remained unchanged for transport and public administration and defence (PAD), although these sectors already had higher than average shares of older workers. Education was the only sector to see a decline, albeit small (from 34% down to 33%), in the share of older workers, despite an increase in absolute numbers (see above).

**Table 1** Older workers by sector (000's) and share (%) of older workers within sector, quarter 1 2019 and quarter 1 2025

Sector	Older workers (000s)		Share of total sectoral employment (15 years+) who are older workers	
	2019 Q1	2025 Q1	2019 Q1	2025 Q1
<b>Agriculture</b>	53.1	58.6	51%	54%
<b>Industry</b>	69.4	100.3	24%	30%
<b>Construction</b>	37.0	54.5	25%	31%
<b>Wholesale &amp; retail</b>	73.6	89.0	24%	28%
<b>Transport</b>	41.9	44.5	39%	40%
<b>Accommodation &amp; food</b>	26.7	30.8	15%	17%
<b>ICT</b>	18.9	37.1	16%	20%
<b>Finance</b>	23.8	39.2	21%	26%
<b>Professional services</b>	34.8	55.3	25%	28%
<b>Administrative &amp; support</b>	31.0	37.7	28%	34%
<b>PAD</b>	42.5	57.3	38%	38%
<b>Education</b>	60.7	82.7	34%	33%
<b>Health and social work</b>	89.5	114.5	31%	31%
<b>Other NACE activities</b>	33.5	35.5	28%	28%

Source: SLMRU analysis of CSO data.

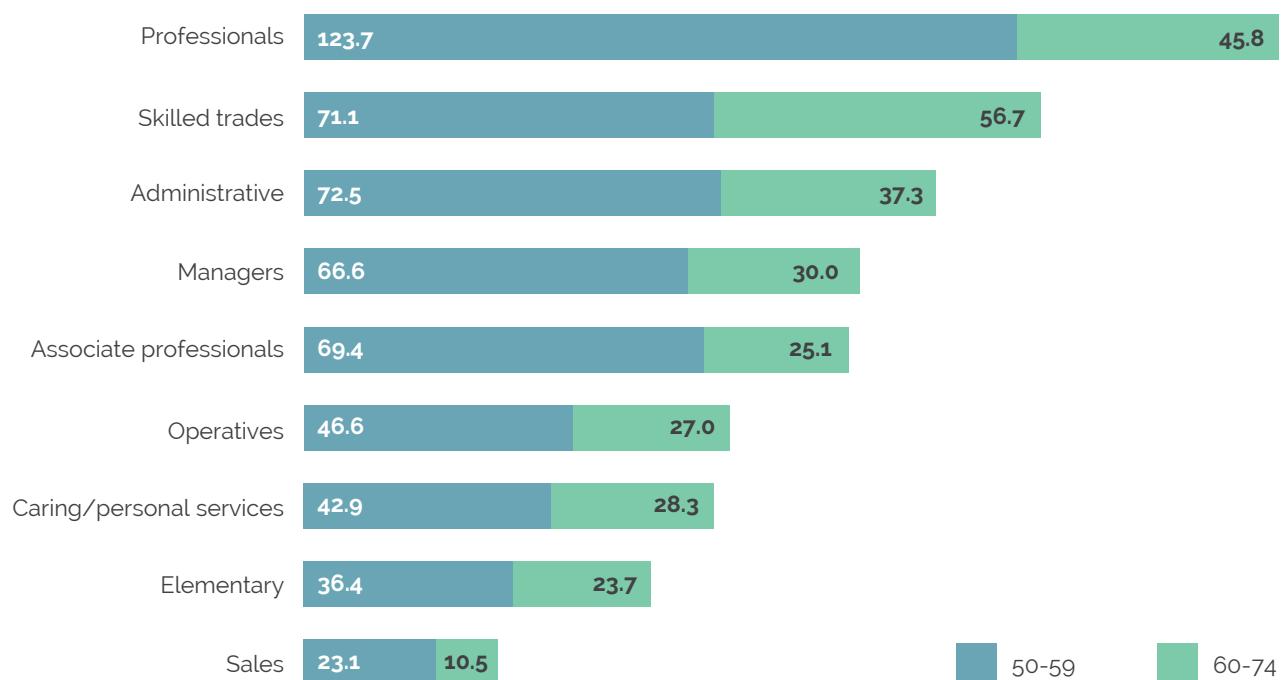
Note: Excluding not applicable

## 4.6 Occupations of older workers

In quarter 1 2025, nearly half (49%) of older workers (aged 50-74 years) were employed in one of three main occupational groups: professionals (169,500), skilled trades (127,800), and administrative roles (109,700) (Figure 11). While the overall occupational distribution is broadly similar between the two age groups (50-59 years and 60-74 years), some differences emerge. Among those aged 50-59 years, professionals were the top occupation (123,700 or 22%), while for those aged 60-74 years, skilled trades (including farmers) formed the largest group (56,700 or 20%), which, as shown earlier in Figure 10, reflects the fact that this age group has a higher than average share in agriculture.

Older workers aged 50-59 years outnumbered those aged 60-74 years across all occupational groups; however, the gap was largest for professional and associate professional occupations, where nearly three quarters of all older workers were aged 50-59 years.

**Figure 11** Older workers by occupation (000s) and age, quarter 1 2025



Source: SLMRU analysis of CSO data

Occupational employment amongst older workers differs by sex. In quarter 1 2025, skilled trades remained the largest occupational group for male older workers (116,200), followed by professionals (83,200), managers (63,800), and operatives (63,600), with sales representing the smallest group (10,200). Administrative roles (89,500) had the largest number of female older workers, followed by professional occupations (86,300) and caring services (54,400), while operatives (10,000) represented the smallest group.

Table 2 shows the share of older workers in employment by occupation. In quarter 1 2025, managerial occupations, at over 40%, had a higher-than-average proportion (30%) of older workers aged 50-74 years. Other occupations with a share above the 30% benchmark included operatives (39%), administrative (37%), skilled trades (37%), and caring/personal services (32%).

Among older workers, the largest absolute increase in employment over the period quarter 1 2019-quarter 1 2025 was in professional occupations (+52,900), followed by associate professionals and managers. The highest percentage growth was recorded for associate professionals, with a 58% rise (+34,500).

Almost all occupational groups recorded an increase in the share of older workers within total occupational employment compared to quarter 1 2019, with the largest rises seen among operatives (up 6 p.p.) and managers (up 5 p.p.).

**Table 2** Older workers by occupation (000's) and share (%) of older workers within occupation, quarter 1 2019 and quarter 1 2025

Occupation	Older workers (000s)		Share of total occupational employment (15 years+) who are older workers	
	2019 Q1	2025 Q1	2019 Q1	2025 Q1
Managers	64.5	96.5	35%	40%
Professionals	116.6	169.5	24%	25%
Associate professionals	60.0	94.5	22%	26%
Administrative	79.5	109.7	35%	37%
Skilled trades	108.1	127.8	33%	37%
Caring/personal services	57.6	71.2	30%	32%
Sales	33.3	33.6	18%	18%
Operatives	59.2	73.6	33%	39%
Elementary	56.5	60.0	22%	23%

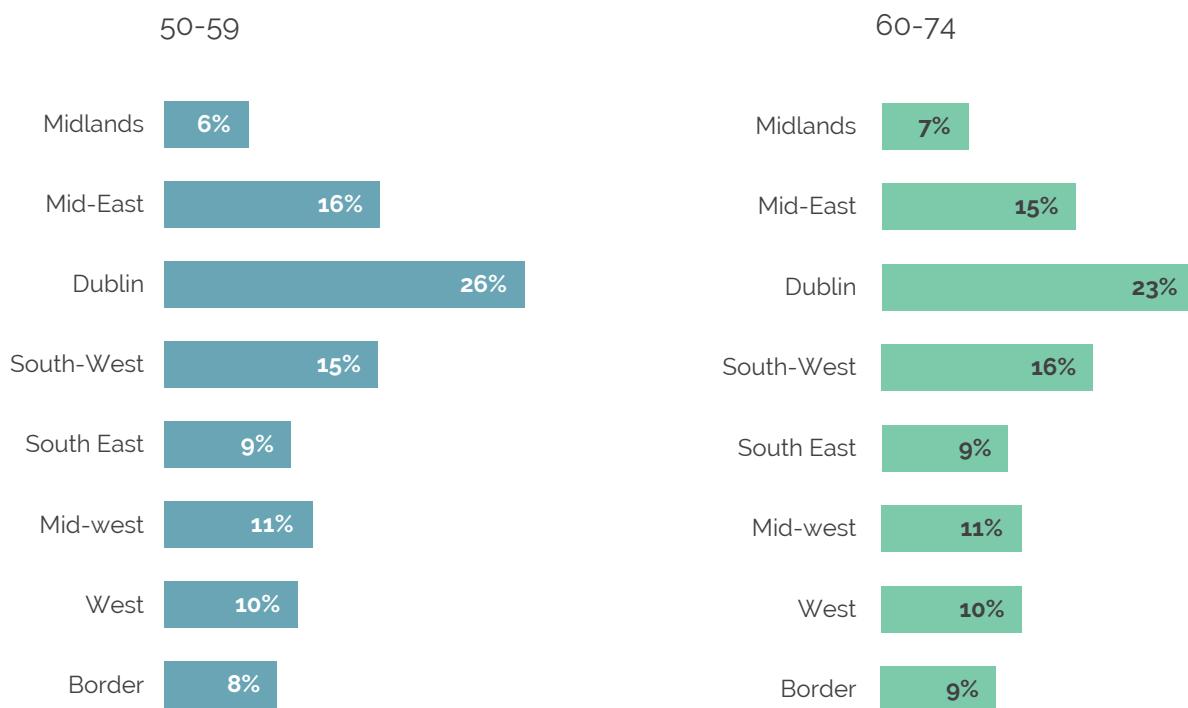
Source: SLMRU analysis of CSO data

## 4.7 Where older workers are located

In quarter 1 2025, Dublin accounted for 25% of Ireland's older workers, representing 210,700 employed persons; this was followed by the South-West (129,900) and the Mid-East (127,800) regions, each accounting for approximately 15% of Ireland's older workforce. The Midlands (52,200 or 6%) and the Border region (69,300 or 8%) had the lowest numbers of older workers. The regional distribution of older workers is consistent with that of the 50-59 and 60-74 age groups- the share of each age group in a region closely matches the overall share of older workers.

At a more granular level, the distribution by age group mirrors the overall regional pattern. Dublin accounted for the highest share of all employed persons aged 50-59 years (26% or 143,700) and 60-74 years (23% or 67,000). The Mid-East accounted for 16% (85,800) of the 50-59 year age group and 15% (42,100) of the 60-74 year age group. The South-West followed with 15% (84,800) of all employed 50-59-year-olds and 16% (45,100) of those aged 60-74 years (Figure 12).

**Figure 12** Share of employment of older workers by age group and region (%) quarter 1 2025



Source: SLMRU analysis of CSO data

The largest absolute increase in the number of workers aged 50-74 years between quarter 1 2019 and quarter 1 2025 was recorded in Dublin (+46,200 or +28%), followed by the South-West (+36,200 or +39%) and Mid-East (+31,500 or +33%) regions. The highest percentage increase in older workers during the same period was observed in the Midlands, with a 42% rise, although given the small size of the workforce in this region, this translated into just 15,500 additional older persons in employment.

In quarter 1 2025, approximately 30% of all employed persons were aged 50-74 years. However, this age distribution is not uniform across regions. Despite having the highest number of older workers, only 25% of Dublin's total employment was accounted for by older workers (aged 50-74 years). The

regions with the highest share of older workers in total employment were the Border and Midlands regions, where about 33% of all employed persons were aged 50-74 years. Between quarter 1 2019 and quarter 1 2025, the share of older workers in total employment increased in every region, indicating a broadly similar upward trend.

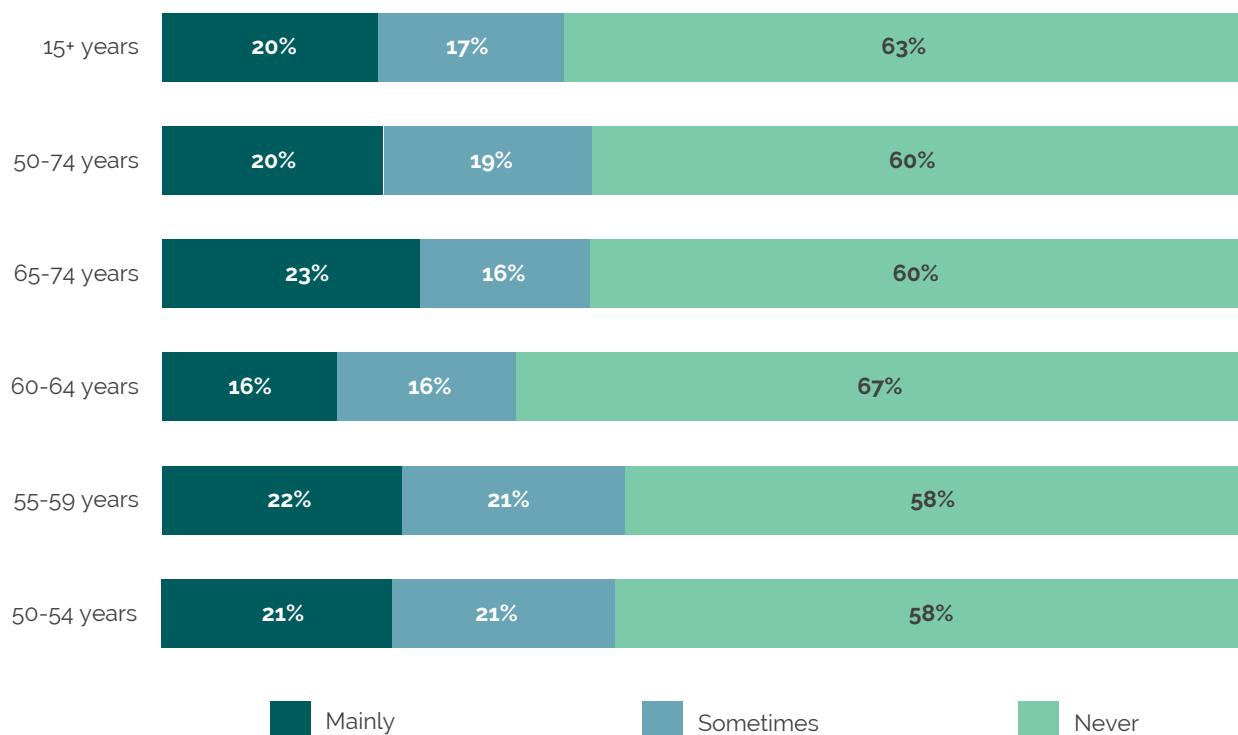
In quarter 1 2025, Ireland's regions can be broadly grouped into two categories based on the predominant occupation among older workers (aged 50-74 years): one where professional roles dominate, and another where skilled trades were more prevalent. In Dublin, Midlands, Mid-East, and South-West, the leading occupation among older workers was professionals, while in all the remaining regions, the most common occupation was skilled trades. Professionals consistently ranked among the top three occupations for older workers in every region.

The Midlands is the only region where the leading occupation in quarter 1 2025 differs from quarter 1 2019. In quarter 1 2025, professionals became the most common occupation, whereas in 2019 skilled trades held the top position, ahead of professionals. By contrast, across all employed persons aged 15-74 years, professionals consistently ranked as the leading occupation in every region.

## 4.8 Working from home (WFH)

In quarter 1 2025, older workers were more likely to work mainly or sometimes from home (39%, or 330,500) compared to all employed aged 15 years or more (37%, or 1,034,900). Within the older workers group, those aged 50-59 were more likely to work from home than those aged 60-74. In fact, workers aged 60-64 were even less likely than the overall employed population to work mainly or sometimes from home. However, as a large share of this age cohort worked in agriculture, these results should be treated with caution (Figure 13).

**Figure 13** Proportion of older workers working from home by age (%), quarter 1 2025



Source: SLMRU analysis of CSO data

Note: Not stated are not included due to small numbers.

Between quarter 1 2019 and quarter 1 2025, the prevalence of mainly or sometimes working from home increased across all age groups, a trend largely attributable to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. The relative increase for older workers (aged 50-74 years) was 114%, lower than the rate for all employed persons aged 15 years and over (129%). The increase varied by age group: those aged 55-59 years recorded the highest relative increase among older workers (134%), 5 p.p. above the rate for all employed. In contrast, the increase for those aged 65-74 years was 67%, 61 p.p. below the rate for all employed aged 15 years and over.

In quarter 1 2025, the highest shares of older workers mainly or sometimes working from home were in professional (64%), associate professional (59%) and managerial (58%) occupations. The largest shares never working from home were among operatives and elementary occupations, with over 90% never working from home.

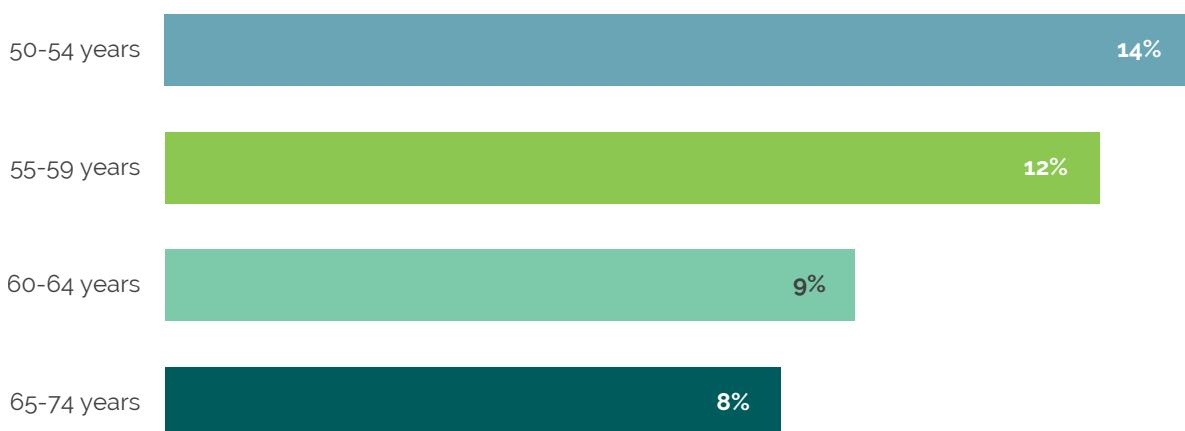
Between quarter 1 2019 and the same quarter of 2025, the largest absolute increases in persons mainly or sometimes working from home were in professional roles for all older workers except the 60-64-years-old cohort, where administrative and secretarial occupations saw the highest growth. Administrative and secretarial occupations recorded the highest percentage growth across all older workers, increasing by 331% (+35,400) and rising to a share of 42% (or 46,100).

Among those aged 50-59 years, females were slightly more likely than males to work from home. For those aged 60-74 years, the pattern reverses, with males more likely than females to work mainly or sometimes from home, possibly due to the high share of males in agricultural roles in this age group. Across all older age bands, the increase in working from home was more pronounced for females, especially in the 50-59 year age group.

## 4.9 Lifelong learning

Older workers had lower than average lifelong learning participation rates. In quarter 2 2025, just under 12% (or 96,500) of older workers had participated in lifelong learning; this compares to 15% for all employed aged 25-74 years. Furthermore, amongst older workers, the lifelong learning participation rate varied between 14% for those aged 50-54 years (40,900) and 8% (8,000) for those aged 65-74 years (Figure 14).

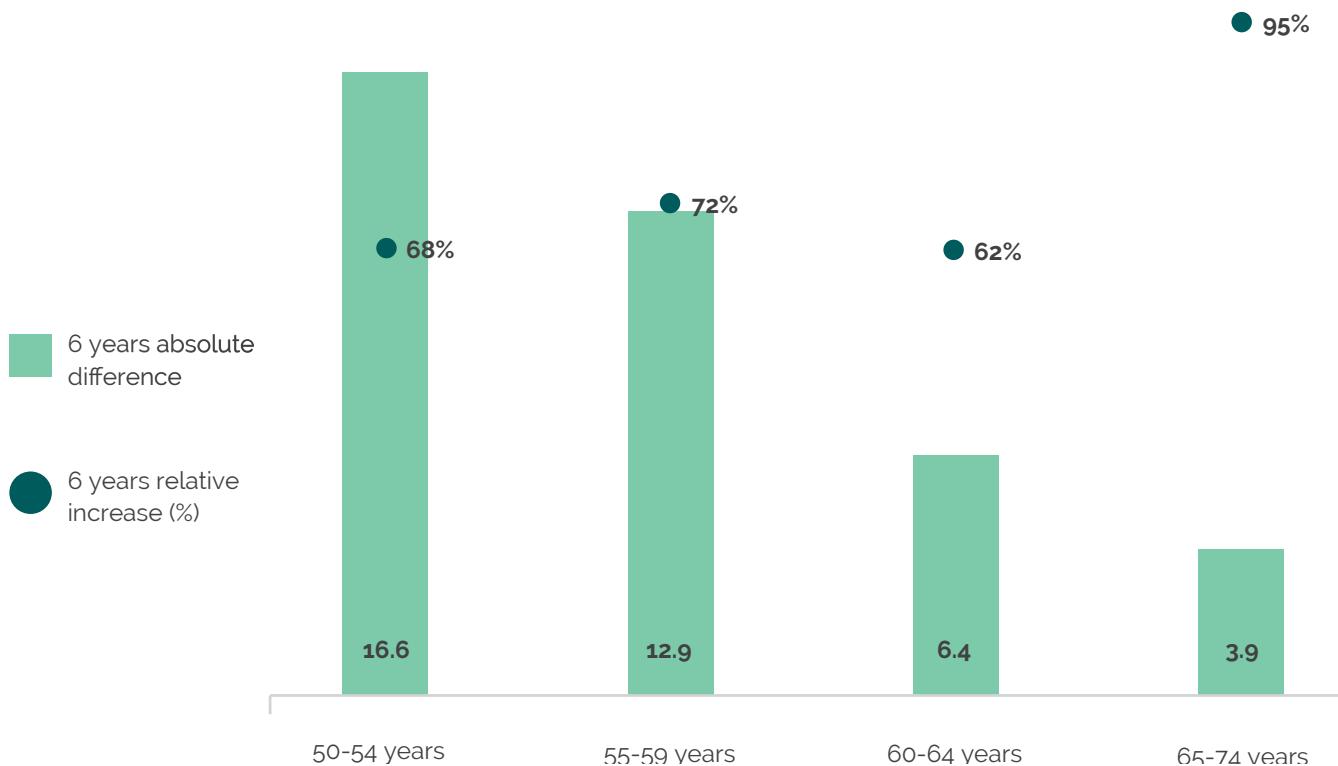
**Figure 14** Lifelong learning participation rate of older workers in employment by age (%), quarter 2 2025



Source: SLMRU analysis of CSO data

Between quarter 2 2019 and quarter 2 2025, the number of lifelong learning participants who were older workers increased by 70%, resulting in an additional 39,900 learners (Figure 15). The increase in lifelong learning participation amongst older workers was stronger than the 49% observed amongst total lifelong learning participants (aged 25-74 years). Overall, older workers made up a third of the total increase in lifelong learning over the period quarter 2 2019-quarter 2 2025.

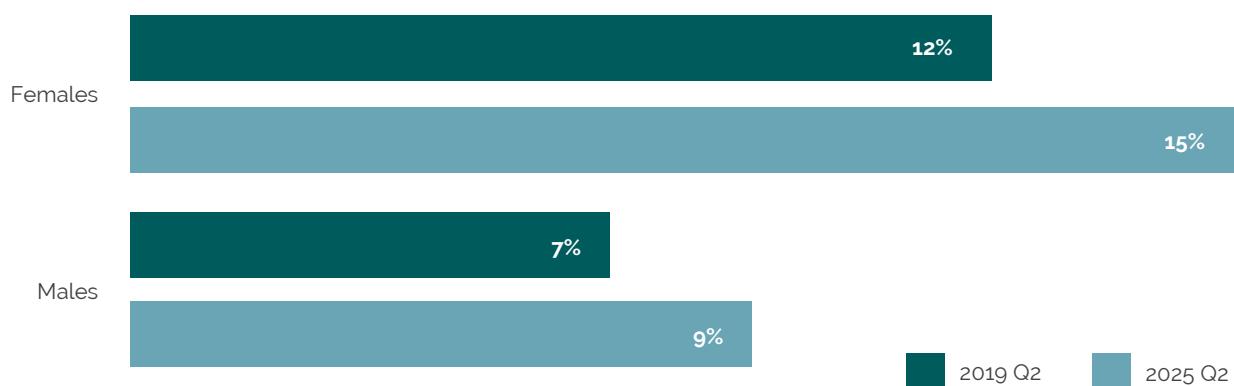
**Figure 15** The absolute (000's) and percentage change of employed lifelong learners by age, quarter 2 2019 and quarter 2 2025



Source: SLMRU analysis of CSO data

The increase in lifelong learning participant numbers between quarter 2 2019 and quarter 2 2025 resulted in increases in participation rates. While there were increases in participation rates for both males and females, females had a greater percentage point increase of 3 p.p. compared to 2 p.p. for males (Figure 16).

**Figure 16** Older workers' lifelong learning participation rates by sex (%), quarter 2 2019 and quarter 2



Source: SLMRU analysis of CSO data

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## 5. Conclusion

In Ireland and across the EU, life expectancy has increased and many people may want or need to work longer. At the same time, although many older workers will have acquired valuable skills and work experience, the rapid pace of change in the modern labour market (e.g. AI, automation, green skills, evolving business practices) means that remaining in employment may prove to be challenging for some.

In order to foster policies to further promote the employment of older workers, it is useful to consider who Ireland's older workers are, their work practices, and where they work. This report shows that the profile of older workers in Ireland differs from that of the overall workforce in several respects. Growth in the number of older workers was stronger than the overall employment growth, with older workers now representing 30% of employment in comparison to less than 28% in quarter 1 2019.

### Older workers

- are more likely to work part-time.
- have higher-than-average shares with at most lower secondary (e.g. Junior Cert) education, despite the fact that nearly a further half hold third-level qualifications
- are less likely to engage in lifelong learning activities; despite relatively strong growth in recent years, the numbers remain small.
- are more likely to work in agriculture or transport and less likely to work in ICT or finance.

Older workers, many of whom have already gained much experience and considerable skills, are vital assets to the labour market. However, sustaining their workforce participation may require targeted upskilling or reskilling opportunities in conjunction with flexible provision aligned to the sectoral and occupational profile of older workers. Such measures can help support Ireland's older workforce to remain a vital and dynamic part of the labour market in the years ahead.

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