Difficult-to-fill vacancies survey

SOLAS learning works

November 2025

Overview: This paper presents the findings of the November 2025 Recruitment Agency Survey. The survey, conducted by the Skills and Labour Market Research Unit (SLMRU) in SOLAS, collected input from selected recruitment agencies in Ireland on occupations that require skills which are in short supply, and in their view, are proving difficult to fill.

Sector news: With near full employment, hiring specific skills remains an issue for recruiters. The demand for certain skills in sectors such as construction, ICT, life sciences, health and financial activities continued in 2025. Agencies stated that employers across many industries were focusing on hybrid skills, combining technical expertise and transversal skills with sector knowledge. The jobs market is dynamic and tight, with many companies prioritizing retention/attraction issues through flexible working conditions, competitive salaries, upskilling and employee engagement.

Science, engineering & technology

35% of reported difficult-to-fill vacancies in:

ICT — software developers, engineers (including security, dev-ops, AI/machine learning), cloud, full stack, site reliability, test, networking, mobile), data scientists/analysts/engineers, technical support staff, solutions architects, risk management.

Life sciences

Engineers — quality control/assurance, environmental health & safety (EHS), R&D, automation, process, validation, manufacturing, electrical, design, mechanical.

Other — pharmacovigilance, regulatory and compliance specialists, technicians (maintenance, electrical, mechanical), operatives (general, food, packaging), managers (lab, quality, EHS), scientists (clinical research), electricians, procurement roles.

Health

6% of reported difficult-to-fill vacancies in:

Nurses (including midwives), consultants/registrars (including emergency medicine and psychiatric), healthcare assistants, therapists (speech & language, occupational), social care workers.

Other

Managers (sales/marketing (including digital), financial), chefs, sales executives, customer care, waiting, bar and cleaning staff, baristas.

Construction

31% of reported difficult-to-fill vacancies in:

Project/site managers, engineers (site/civil, electrical, EHS, mechanical), health & safety officers, quantity surveyors, technicians (maintenance, electrical, BIM), planners, sales/procurement staff, site administration.

Construction drivers, carpenters (including shuttering), ground workers/banksman, welders, foremen/supervisors, steel erectors/fixers, pipe layers, electricians, scaffolders, curtain wallers, glaziers/fitters.

Transport & Logistics

12% of reported difficult-to-fill vacancies in:

Drivers (rigid/artic, forklift, HGV, reach truck, van, bus), warehouse/general operatives, freight forwarders, supply chain analysts, planners, mechanics, warehouse managers, customer service, sales.

Financial

11% of reported difficult-to-fill vacancies in:

Various accountants (financial, tax, practice, insurance), financial and insurance advisers/underwriters, payroll/accounts administrators, credit controllers, managers (operational, insurance, portfolio), regulatory and compliance roles, company secretaries, accounts technicians.

Survey results

How difficulty to fill?

Almost **half** (49%) of the difficult-to-fill vacancy mentions were either very or too difficult to fill. This level of difficulty was particularly acute for construction and engineering vacancies.

What level of experience?

Due to a tight and competitive market, companies are now prioritising skills over experience for specific skilled jobs. **Over half** of recruitment agencies stated that employers were willing to accept candidates with less than 3 years' experience. A further **quarter** sought at least five years' experience, with this share rising to three-fifths for ICT-related mentions; in most cases, these roles were senior positions.

Has demand changed?

In light of broader economic uncertainty, many are adopting a prudent approach to recruitment. The results indicated that just over a third **(38%)** of responses mentioned an increase in demand for difficult-to-fill vacancies in the last year (in particular, certain roles in construction), while **57%** stated that demand remains unchanged from the previous year and a further **5%** stated a fall in demand for the mentioned difficult-to-fill vacancies in the last year.

Who's getting the jobs?

Retaining and attracting international talent to Ireland is more critical than ever for certain skilled jobs. The result of this survey found that **a quarter** of the difficult to-fill vacancies were filled by mostly Irish candidates, while the remainder were filled by a combination of Irish, EU and non-EU candidates.

Types of contracts?

Demand continues for both permanent and contract jobs. Of the difficult-to-fill vacancy mentions, **56%** related to permanent positions only, **17%** to contract positions only, while the remainder related to a combination of both permanent and contract positions.

Key job attractions?

Salary and remote working are the most important factors impacting job attractiveness, followed by job permanency, perks and bonuses and upskilling opportunities.

Other key skills in demand

Transversal Skills

Respondents reported that transversal skills are essential; employers value versatile candidates in today's competitive working environment. **Strong communication** skills were the most frequently mentioned, while negotiation, leadership. teamwork, and project management were also key skills that employers seek in today's business environment.

Green Skills

The demand for green skills is growing across all sectors, with respondents reporting a rise in demand for roles related to environmental, health and safety and renewable energy management.

Digital Skills

Demand for digital skills remains high across all sectors in Ireland, especially within technology and finance. Fundamental computer competencies are expected from all candidates, and reskilling and upskilling are vital to address new skill requirements. BIM and AutoCAD were mentioned for construction-related roles, while data visualisation was required for various project management roles. Respondents also mentioned that AI expertise is increasingly sought after, particularly in roles such as blockchain engineers and AI & machine learning engineers.

Challenges

Respondents indicated that the main barriers to attracting international candidates to Ireland remain the same: limited availability and high cost of accommodation. Companies continue to offer attractive salaries due to economic and market pressures. With the economy nearing full employment, businesses find it increasingly challenging to recruit and retain skilled professionals. According to the recruitment agencies surveyed, hybrid working options remain an essential incentive. However, there has been a reduction in fully remote roles offered and increased onsite presence is now an expectation.