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recruitment

# 2023 REVIEW & 2024 TREND FORECAST

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# Introduction

Turbulence. That would be the defining word when it comes to reflecting on the recruitment market over the last 12 months. It has been a year with several downs, but which has, thankfully, ended on an up.

As we entered 2023, it is fair to say the implications of the large job losses announced by several of the major tech companies resonated deeply across the marketplace. While it is to be expected that this would influence the IT sector, what was surprising was how many other industries were impacted.

Basically the market got jittery. When this was coupled with rising costs – from higher energy prices or heavier supply chain related expenses, most of the various sectors decided to reduce their level of hiring at the outset of the year.

As a result the market stalled and recruitment across multiple different sectors was impacted.

What was also notable was that this approach persisted for a significant portion of the year. This wasn't just a factor in Q1, but also for most of Q2. It wasn't until Q3 that the market began to normalise. At that point, thankfully, recruitment green shoots began to appear and a lot more opportunities started coming to market.

In fact, by the time we reached Q4, the market had once again become very busy, with a significant rise in opportunities becoming available across multiple sectors.


As a result of this turbulence in the market, the number of advertised opportunities handled by FRS Recruitment came to 88,964 in 2023.

This was broadly the situation across the entire country, with the number of opportunities declining in 20 of the Republic's 26 counties. The main regional bright spot coming in the North West part of the country where recruitment activity increased, although admittedly it was coming from a low base.

Another massive factor in the market over the last 12 months has been employment saturation. There have never been as many people working in the Irish economy as there was in Q3 2023. This obviously makes the market more challenging.

It also means that many individuals, especially highly skilled individuals, realise it is a candidate's market and act accordingly.





This resulted in a notable change in behaviour across recruitment over the last 12 months, with many employees leveraging better salaries and conditions from their employers to ensure they remained in their existing roles. Certainly in the first half of 2023 this suited a lot of employees, with the mood amongst candidates reflecting the mood of their employers and a more conservative outlook taking hold.

Coupled with the rising costs of living this had a major impact on employment costs all across the economy.

Even those who did enter the market were not necessarily looking to change jobs. A significant number of candidates sought to present the terms being offered by prospective employers to their existing management in an effort to secure more lucrative counter offers.

Despite these circumstances being prevalent across the market, FRS Recruitment still managed to increase the number of applications we received per opportunity. In fact we secured a 32% rise on the proportion of applications secured in comparison with 2022.

While 2023 has been challenging, as we turn our attention to 2024 there are a lot of positive indications that there will be an uptick in recruitment activity in the next 12 months. As already mentioned there were a significant number of additional opportunities coming on stream towards the end of 2023 and we fully expect that momentum to continue into the new year.

As is detailed in this report, we can see significant demand developing for Accountants, Insurance Personnel, Engineering roles, Science roles, Construction staff, Cybersecurity personnel, General Practitioners, and Social Care professionals. In the Temporary employment sector there will be plenty of opportunities for drivers, within Manufacturing and Production as well as for Customer Service personnel.

We also believe that inflationary forces should start to reduce, bringing more certainty to the market and allowing employers to consider their headcount needs. However in the current full employment market, there will still be pressure on salaries.

Overall we have a cautiously optimistic view for the entire recruitment market over the next 12 months.

FRS Recruitment - 2023 Review & 2024 Trend Forecast



**We are  
forecasting a  
rise in  
opportunities  
of 8% in 2024**



# Job Opportunities & Response Rate



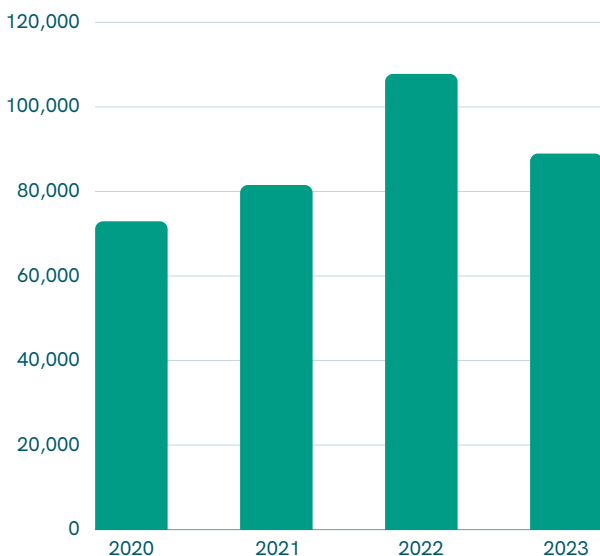


## Job Opportunities & Response Rates

If 2022 was the year of the great recruitment recovery following the pandemic, then it would be fair to say that 2023 represented more of a mixed year. It was also a year that illustrated how candidates are monitoring the market and are picking their moments before they are willing to consider new positions.

Perhaps unsurprisingly the number of opportunities in 2023 fell below the level reached during the previous 12 months. Coming out of the pandemic there was a surge of openings that needed to be filled quickly across sectors like tourism and hospitality as well as retail, while the fallout from the pandemic also necessitated plenty of healthcare opportunities as well.

None of these drivers of activity applied in 2023. In fact the first half of the year saw employers adopting a more conservative outlook to their hiring practices. This was seemingly influenced by the changing jobs environment across the tech sector, with a significant number of high profile job losses announced by high profile companies in late 2022/ early 2023.



*Total Job Opportunities*

Fearing the broader economic outlook, many employers decided to bide their time before going to market, maximising their current resources as much as possible.

However, it was never going to be possible for employers to maintain this approach in an economy which is experiencing almost full employment. According to the Central Statistics Office (CSO) in 2023, the total number of people employed in the Republic of Ireland reached 2.655 million in Q3 – a record high level.

In those circumstances it can be difficult for employers to source qualified personnel, especially when there is strong competition in the market, across multiple sectors.

Candidates soon realised this and began to use it to their advantage over the course of the year. Broadly speaking, candidates – like their employers – decided to take a more careful outlook to the market during the first part of the year. No one wanted to change jobs when there was employment uncertainty in the air following those tech job losses.



However, as the year progressed and the wave of high-profile headcount reductions came to an end, the candidates were quick to adjust their approach. Many soon realised that there were rewarding opportunities out there and that employers placed a high value on personnel with difficult to find skills or experience.

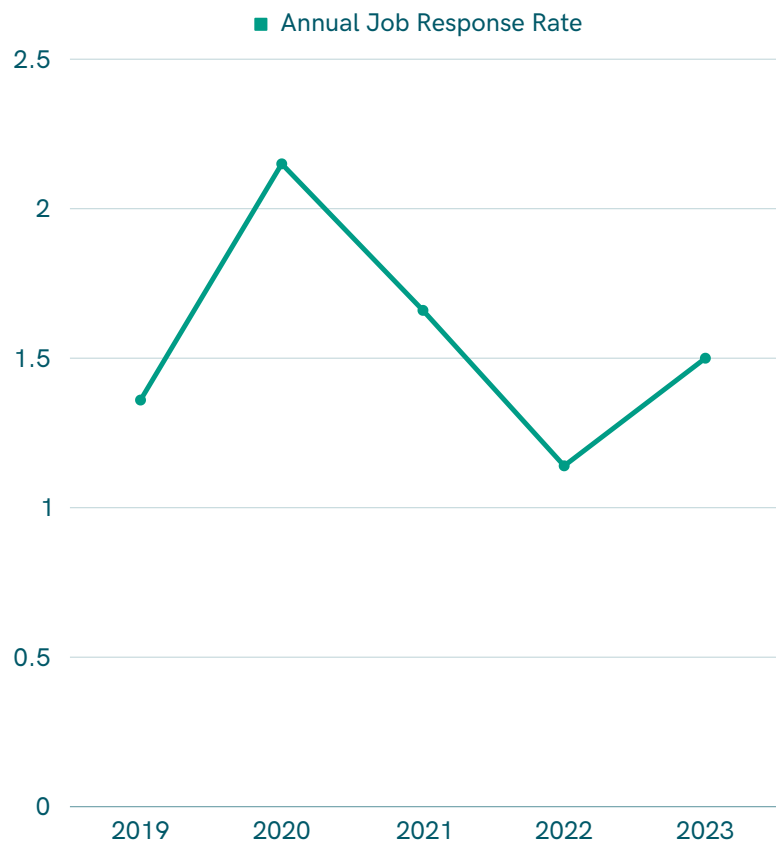
The result was to see a significant recovery in the number of applications each job opportunity received in 2023. In comparison to 2022, FRS Recruitment recorded a 32% increase on the number of applicants per opportunity posted – a strong showing given the already high level of employment in the market.

Although there had been very high response levels achieved in 2020 and 2021, these were during the pandemic times when there were a high number of people seeking opportunities outside of their chosen sectors (for hospitality and retail personnel). During those years a lot of people were receiving Pandemic Unemployment Payments (PUP), and as such, were jumping at multiple roles that came on to market – meaning there was a much deeper pool of available jobseekers to pull from.

However, that additional supply of jobseekers stopped being a factor in early/ mid 2022 and the market quickly became fully saturated, with more openings than qualified personnel available.

So, the recruitment process had to evolve with the diminishing number of people seeking new roles. Reacting to the needs and fluctuations of the market, one of the key areas of focus for our team in FRS Recruitment was to bring these opportunities to the attention of the right people.

We didn't wait for the candidates to come to our clients – we went much further. The result was to secure a strong response level for these opportunities, significantly ahead of 2019, the most comparable year in recent times.

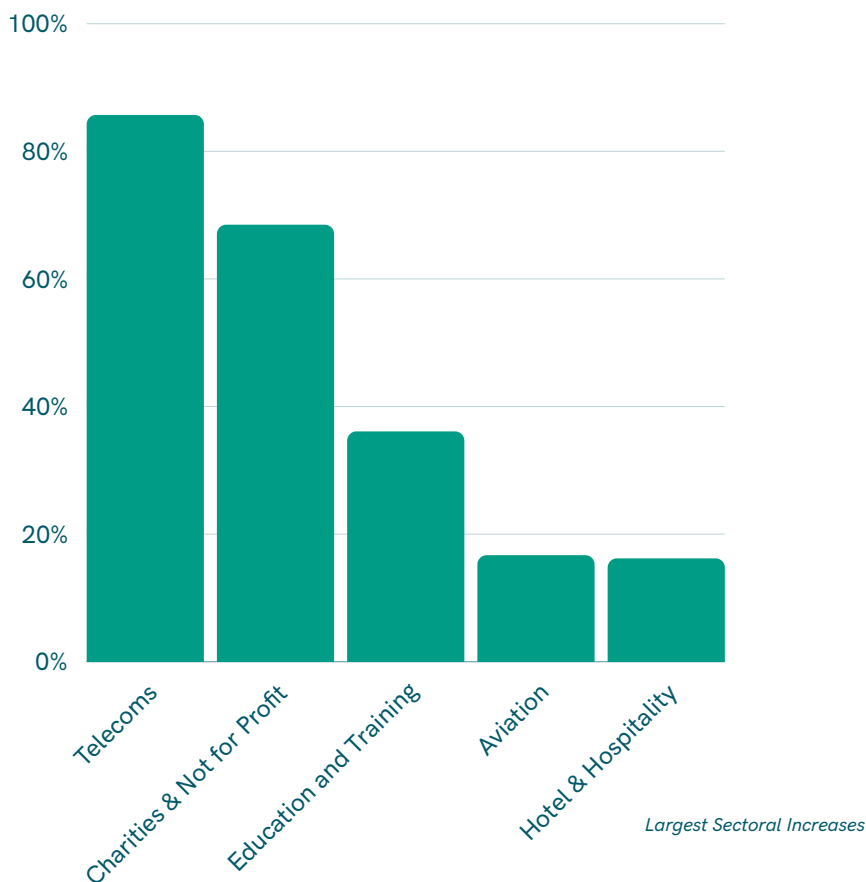


## Sectoral Impact

Interestingly, while 2023 represented a more challenging employment market across the economy, it would not be accurate to say the impact was universal. FRS Recruitment recorded several sectors where the number of opportunities were actually on the rise over the last 12 months, going against the general market conditions.

The largest increase came in the telecoms sector, where the number of opportunities almost doubled from 2022. A jump of more than 85% for the year-on-year analysis shows just how effectively that sector performed, perhaps surprisingly given the fortunes of the wider IT industry over the course of the last 12 - 18 months.

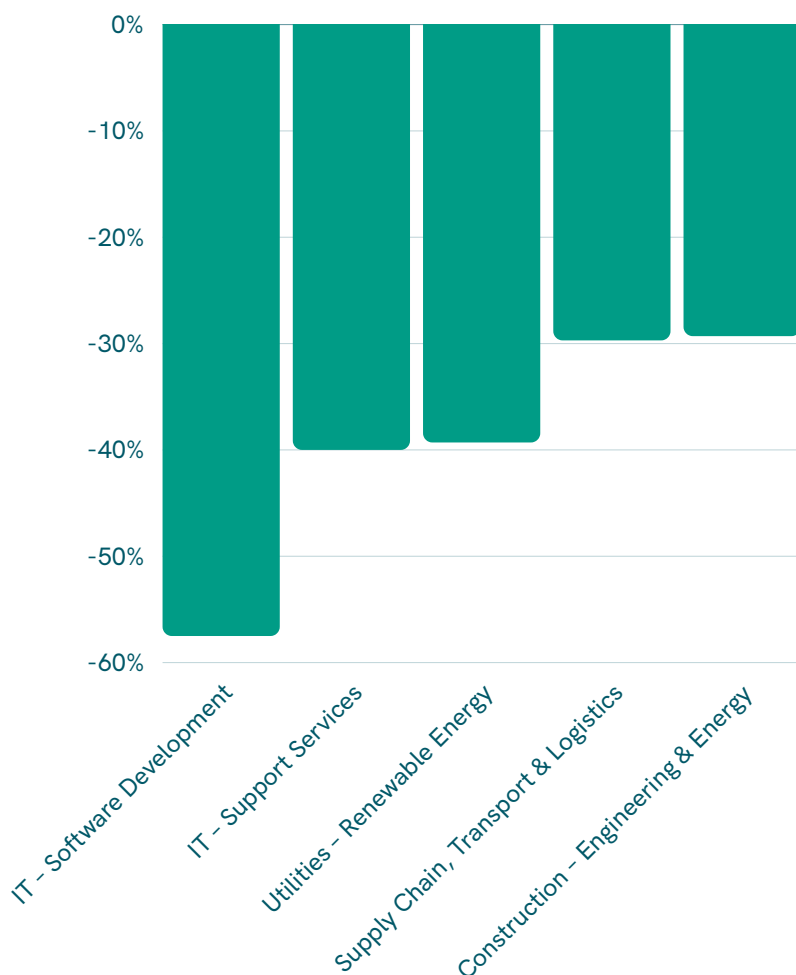
Also on the rise were opportunities in the charities and the not-for-profit sector, as well as in education and training. Another significant rise in opportunities was in aviation, as the public firmly put the pandemic behind them, and foreign travel became more common again in 2023. The hotel and hospitality sectors also benefitted from this trend, with strong levels of international tourism returning to Ireland.





At the other end of the spectrum, probably the least surprising data point was the decline in job openings recorded in the IT sector. Influenced by the substantial and high-profile job losses announced by several of the major companies towards the end of 2022 and early 2023, recruitment in the sector froze.

The major players were trying to reduce their headcounts and the rest of that sector didn't want to take any risks in such uncertain circumstances.



As a result, the number of job openings in IT software development and IT support services dropped considerably in the last year. However, as we reached the last quarter of 2023, that trend began to change and opportunities started coming on stream again, which is why we anticipate modest growth is likely to return to the sector next year.

Other sectors where there was a significant drop in opportunities included utilities - renewable energy, supply chain, transport and logistics and construction - engineering & energy.





## Regional Impact

With the national figures showing the difficulties experienced in the market over the course of 2023, it should come as no surprise to learn that this also reflected the regional picture around the country. In fact, across 20 of the Republic's 26 counties the number of opportunities declined over the last 12 months when compared to the figures from the previous year.

In line with these trends, there were notable and expected increases in the main population centres. Opportunities were down by 24% in Dublin, while they also declined by approximately 20% in Cork, Galway and Limerick. Proportionately though, the largest decreases were experienced in Monaghan, Louth and Clare.

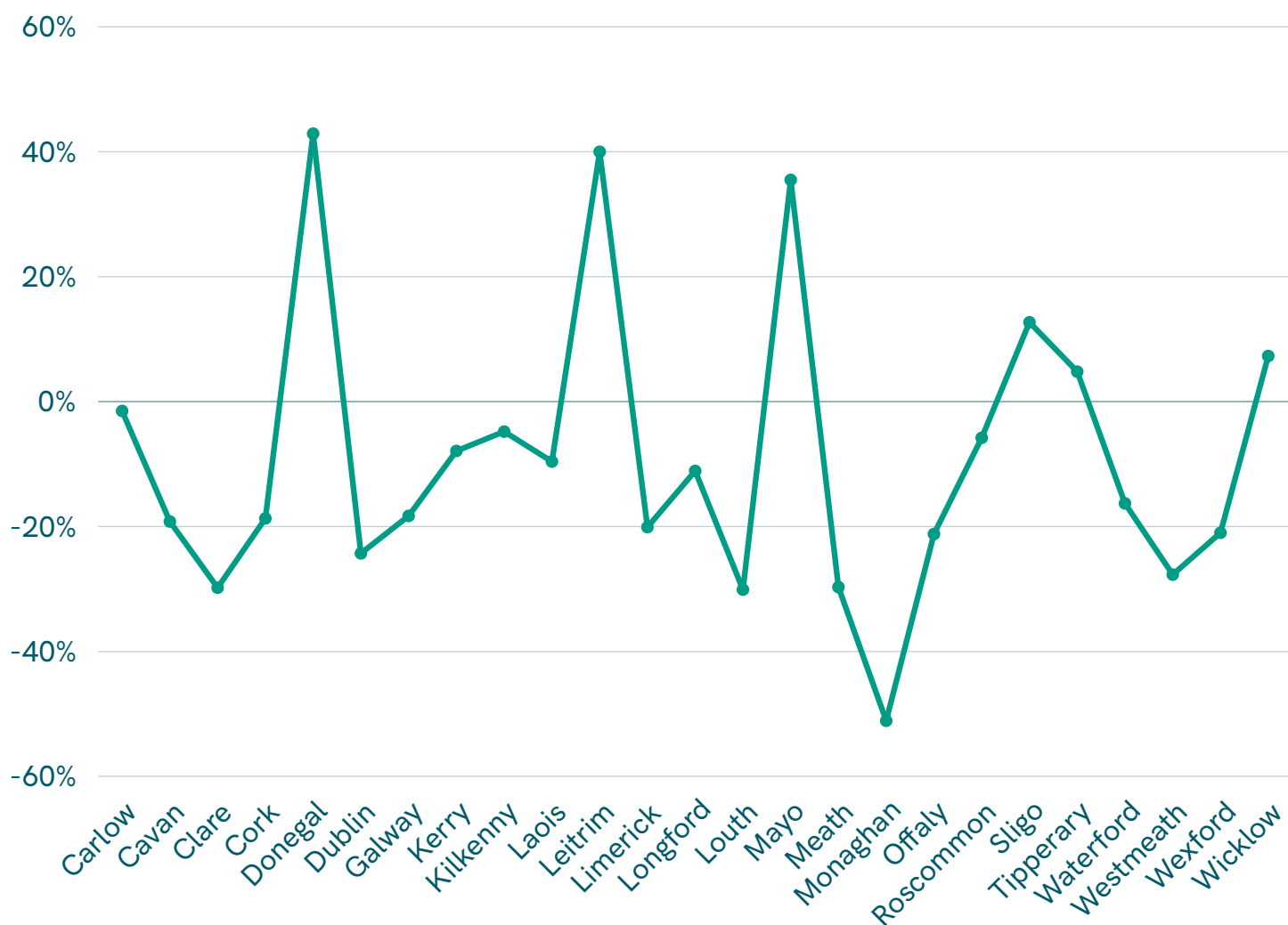
There was better news in six counties who actually managed to buck the national trends and saw the number of opportunities grow in 2023. In fact, there was actually a recruitment revival in the North Western part of the country with Donegal, Leitrim, Sligo and Mayo all seeing a jump. Three of those four counties had seen the number of postings decline in 2022, illustrating how quickly the regional picture can change on a county-to-county basis.

There were also rising levels of opportunities in Tipperary and Wicklow over the course of 2023.



**Donegal, Leitrim,  
Sligo, Mayo,  
Tipperary & Wicklow  
saw a rise in job  
opportunities in  
2023**

## County by County Analysis

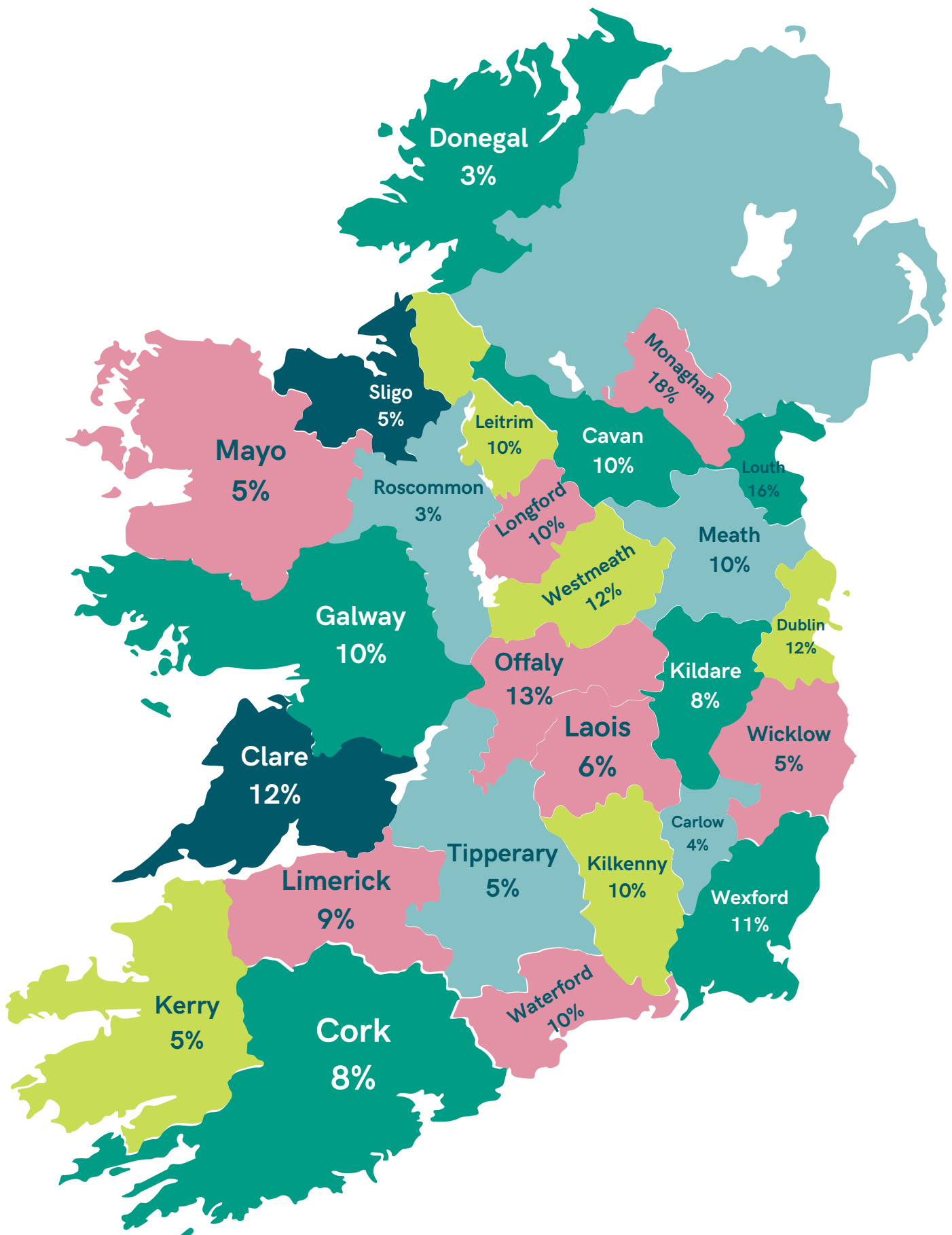


Looking ahead and given the challenges experienced in most parts of the country in 2023, our recruitment team is optimistic about the market for the year ahead and expects to see the level of opportunities grow in most counties during 2024.

However, while there may be more activity over the next year, it is also fair to say that the increases experienced will be generally modest. This will be in keeping with a recruitment market that is already at the level of practically full employment and an economy that is feeling the impact of both high inflation and EU monetary policy designed to reduce the availability of credit.

Taking those factors into consideration and using our team's strong local knowledge gained from our presence on the ground in every part of the country, here are our projections for how the number of opportunities in every one of the 26 counties will evolve during the course of 2024.

## Estimated Increase in Job Opportunities in 2024





# Healthcare

Doctors ● Nurses ● Allied Health





## Healthcare - Doctors

As 2023 unfolded, the Doctor's sector at FRS Recruitment witnessed a steady state in job postings compared to 2022, reflecting a consistent and ongoing demand in the healthcare industry. Despite the challenges and shifts in the medical landscape, our team has navigated the sector to meet evolving needs.

The year saw a notable increase in certain specialties. Psychiatry roles, particularly at the consultant grade, experienced significant growth. However, this was contrasted by a decrease in roles within Anaesthesiology. Interestingly, no new types of roles emerged, indicating a stabilisation in sector requirements.

A key trend in 2023 was the increase in applications from overseas candidates outside the EU, especially in the latter half of the year. This shift was influenced by the HSE's hiring freeze from October, which led to a surplus of Non-EU Medical Council registered Doctors seeking opportunities.

Client demand continued to be higher outside of Dublin, with community health organisations in the west and northwest showing significant increases. Candidates expressed a preference for locations with readily available accommodation, impacting the geographical distribution of roles. Rural areas, particularly in the West and Northwest, saw increased needs for General Practitioners and Psychiatrists.

2023 was unique in that no temporary or contract work was undertaken until the announcement of a new framework for Locum Doctors set to begin in December, promising attractive rate increases for contract locums. SlainteCare contracts launched in March, significantly raising the salary scale for public-only consultants. The voluntary and private sectors followed suit with salary increases, though there was no change in NCHD contracts or remuneration until the projected Locum rate increase in 2024.



Remote work remained a rarity in the Doctor's sector, with some Telemedicine roles available. There's an emerging interest in remote work from overseas in specialties such as GP, Radiology, and Psychiatry, but little facilitation for such arrangements has been observed.

The rising cost of living made Ireland less attractive to UK Consultants, despite higher wages, and also influenced preferences for employment locations, with cities and towns becoming less desirable.

Upskilling continued to be a significant factor, with the training fund offered by the Consultant Slaintecare contract being particularly attractive. AI tools like ChatGPT were employed for ads, blogs, and interview preparation, although their direct impact on medical practice remains minimal.

## Looking Ahead to 2024

Looking ahead, we expect a decrease in NCHD roles by 30% and an increase in Consultant roles by 40%. The demand for General Practitioners and Locum Doctors of all grades is anticipated to rise. The sector is poised to see tighter demands around NCHD rotations and increased attractiveness for UK and western European Consultants.







## Healthcare – Nurses

2023 has been a pivotal year for the Nursing sector at FRS Recruitment. There was a significant upsurge in demand, with a 15% increase in permanent roles and a remarkable 50% rise in temporary positions, reflecting the dynamic nature of healthcare needs.

The year saw an escalated need across various Nursing specialties, particularly in elderly care, Theatre, ICU, Emergency, and Cath-Lab Nursing, alongside a substantial rise in Intellectual Disability Nursing roles. Management positions, including Clinical Nurse Managers and Directors of Nursing, also experienced an increase, highlighting a trend towards more leadership roles in Nursing.

However, a worrying development was the emigration of Irish-trained Nurses to the UK and Australia, contributing to a notable talent shortage in the local market.

The shift in work preferences became apparent as remote and work-from-home positions declined, reverting back to traditional, office-based roles. Conversely, community-based Paediatric Nursing roles emerged as a new service area, indicating an adaptation in healthcare delivery.

Application trends highlighted a low number of local and EU candidates, contrasted by a surge in applications from non-EU countries, predominantly African nations. Factors such as Ireland's high cost of living, accommodation issues, and travel inconveniences were significant influencers in these trends.

Regionally, the demand for Nursing vacancies remained consistent across all areas, with Clinical Nurses required predominantly in cities, and community and Elderly Care Nurses needed in all regions. However, areas like West Cork, Kerry, Donegal faced candidate shortages due to their remote locations.

Salaries in the public sector saw increases in March and October, with the private sector also witnessing a slight increase, particularly at the Staff Nurse level. This adjustment was necessary to attract and retain staff in a highly competitive market. Meanwhile, management roles in the private sector maintained their 2022 salary levels.

Around 70% of job postings included salary information, reflecting a trend towards transparency in compensation.

Interest in remote working remained high among candidates, but healthcare employers showed a distinct preference for traditional, on-site work arrangements. The cost of living, particularly high rents in cities and the scarcity of accommodation, significantly impacted the sector, influencing job suitability decisions based on travel costs and living expenses.



Upskilling was not a primary focus in the Nursing sector, given the strict qualification requirements already in place for these roles. Due to the hands-on nature of the work involved in most Nursing roles, the impact of AI tools on the sector remained limited.

## Looking ahead to 2024

For the upcoming year, we anticipate a slight increase in Nursing roles, estimated at around 20%, driven by the growing shortage of healthcare staff. The demand is expected to span from Staff Nurse to Senior Management levels, with more specialised roles likely to be in high demand.

Salary expectations in the Nursing sector are projected to stabilise, given the two increases seen in 2023. The healthcare sector's dynamics suggest a continued need for professionals due to an aging population and increased healthcare requirements, with international recruitment efforts set to continue in response to local staff shortages.

**Overall we  
expect the  
number of  
Nursing roles  
to increase by  
approximately  
20% in 2024**





## Healthcare - Allied Health

The Allied Healthcare sector at FRS Recruitment has witnessed substantial growth in 2023, paralleling the Nursing sector's expansion. Similar to the Nursing sector, we experienced a 15% increase in permanent roles and an almost 50% rise in temporary roles, reflecting the evolving landscape of healthcare needs.

This year, the sector faced a pressing demand for Social Care workers and Support workers in community settings, along with Social Care management roles, particularly for the Person in Charge (PIC) positions. However, the market suffered from a shortage of candidates, exacerbated by the emigration of Irish-trained professionals to the UK and Australia.

Remote and work-from-home positions saw a decline, marking a shift back to traditional office-based roles. This change reflects a broader trend in healthcare, moving away from the pandemic-induced remote working models.

Application trends highlighted a low number of applications from candidates residing in Ireland and the EU. This shift is partly attributed to stringent HIQA requirements for management roles and the high cost of living in Ireland.

The demand for Social Care workers was consistent across all regions, with notable shortages in rural locations – again, there is a correlation between a lack of roles and remote areas with lower population densities.

The sector saw a 50% growth in temporary Social Care and Healthcare Assistant roles in the private sector. However, many Section 38 and 39 companies still operate on outdated HSE pay scales, leading to significant challenges in staff attraction and retention.

The continued conversation about remote working in 2023 has impacted people's interest in remote working. However, while a large percentage do have an interest in the option of undertaking work remotely, employers are urging an approach to traditional healthcare arrangements that involved face-to-face interactions. This is consistent with roles right across the healthcare sector.

Upskilling opportunities are not a primary focus in the Social Care/Allied Health sector due to strict qualification requirements already in place.



## Looking ahead to 2024

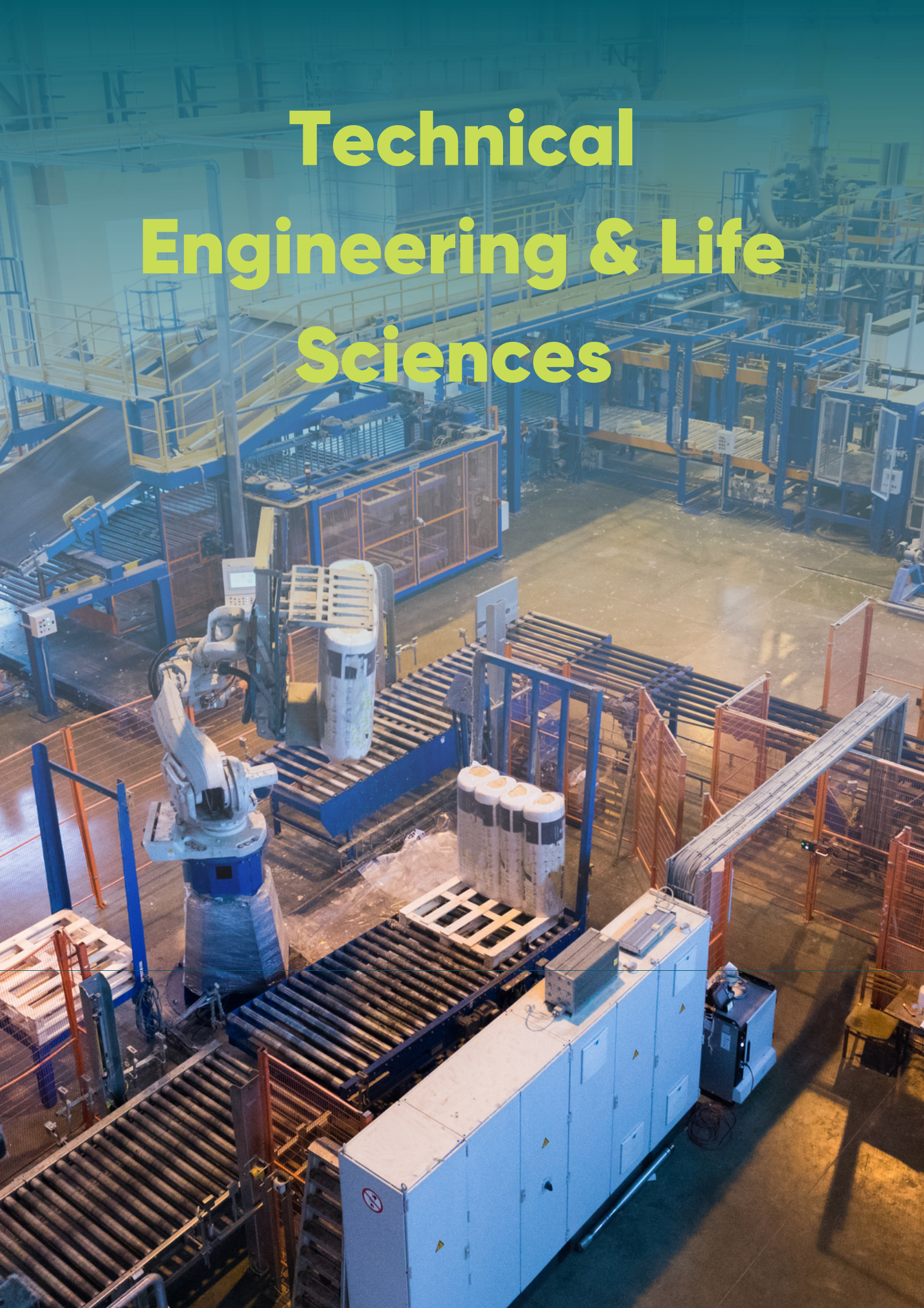
For the upcoming year, we anticipate a further increase in demand for Social Care professionals, driven by the introduction of CORU registration and tighter restrictions on accepted qualifications. We expect to see more demand for senior management roles and specialised positions.

Salary expectations may see an increase, particularly for Social Care positions, which have not seen significant raises in recent years. The healthcare sector continues to evolve dynamically, with key trends including increased demand for mental health services, flexible work arrangements, skill diversification, and international recruitment efforts to address local shortages.

**Overall we  
expect to see  
more demand  
for senior  
management &  
specialised  
positions.**



# Technical Engineering & Life Sciences





# Technical Engineering & Life Sciences

Over the course of 2023, the defining characteristic for the Technical Engineering & Life Sciences sector has been the continuous skills shortage. There have been plenty of opportunities available, but not enough talent to fill those roles.

We saw a particular need for more talent across the Medical Device and Manufacturing sectors.

As an illustration of the number of openings in the market, our Technical Engineering & Life Sciences team at FRS Recruitment advertised more than 10,000 opportunities for our clients across Ireland – an increase of approximately 10% on the previous year. Despite the skills shortage in the market, we also managed to secure over 31,000 responses for those opportunities.

The openings that came on stream throughout 2023 were quite varied. Quality Engineering roles, Field Service Engineers, Fitters, Welders and Production Supervisors were all in great demand. There was an even greater need for people to take up Mechanical Engineering or Electrical Engineering positions.

Another key trend during the last 12 months has seen employers seeking out personnel to take on all levels of Environmental Health and Safety roles. This need has been enhanced by the growing influence of the '*green agenda*' as more and more businesses in this sector look to ensure they are compliant with the relevant legislation and can meet their sustainability reporting requirements.


Within the Medical Device sector there was also a move towards the creation of new specialised roles, such as Accelerator Technologies Engineer. We also saw some UK lead companies who maintain an Irish presence seeking out localised field service Engineers to service their Irish client base.

Demand for roles seemed to grow with employers in all parts of the country, although the strongest needs were notable in the Leinster region.

The only real decrease in opportunities experienced in Technical Engineering & Life Sciences were for General Mechanic type positions.







Despite the number of opportunities across the market, the sector was reporting a reduction in the number of applications on a general level. There were some practical considerations that partially influenced this outlook within the market. For example, the uncertainty generated by the tech layoffs announced in late 2022/early 2023 undoubtedly impacted candidate perspectives, with many becoming less receptive to new opportunities given the suggested economic uncertainty caused by those high-profile job losses.

Another key motivation for candidates was location. Qualified personnel were less willing to consider roles in areas where there were accommodation/ housing shortages. This was particularly apparent in Dublin with candidates seeking out positions that didn't require them to be based within the capital.

Cost of living also significantly impacted on the market, with candidates recognising their value and the limited options available to their employers. This led to increased expectation of higher salaries across most of the different positions, with candidates leveraging the opportunities available to negotiate improved salaries.

Employers were also willing to meet these requests. Recognising the difficulties associated with attracting and maintaining suitable talent, many employers put forward substantial counter offers to employees who were considering a move to another company.

There was also a push from employees to ensure the growing expense associated with their commutes (i.e, rising petrol/ diesel prices) were combatted in their salary packages.

Upskilling has always been an option provided by many employers across Technical Engineering & Life Sciences sector. However, it has become even more prevalent in recent times, with many employers seeing this as a means of retaining their staff. Multinationals, in particular, are proactive in this space and show great willingness to invest in their staff, recognising the appeal this offers in attracting new employees.

With the market also experiencing a talent shortage, many employers are also seeing upskilling as a means of developing the skills and talents they require, and which are not available on the marketplace.



## Looking ahead to 2024

The limited pool of talent will continue to be a key factor in the market next year.

Recognising the talent limitations that exist, some employers are seeking to make their operations more efficient and to reduce their headcount requirements. Companies who have significant resources at their disposal are looking to automate parts of their production or utilise machine learning to address more complex tasks.

Despite these technological changes however, next year will still be a candidates' market for any skilled and qualified individuals seeking out new opportunities.

There will be no shortage of Engineering positions or science roles available as employers continue to search for these highly skilled candidates.

We also forecast a strong push by employers seeking out graduates in these disciplines, with employers taking a longer-term view and willing to train up the talent they need. It is also one of the few sources of guaranteed talent available to employers.

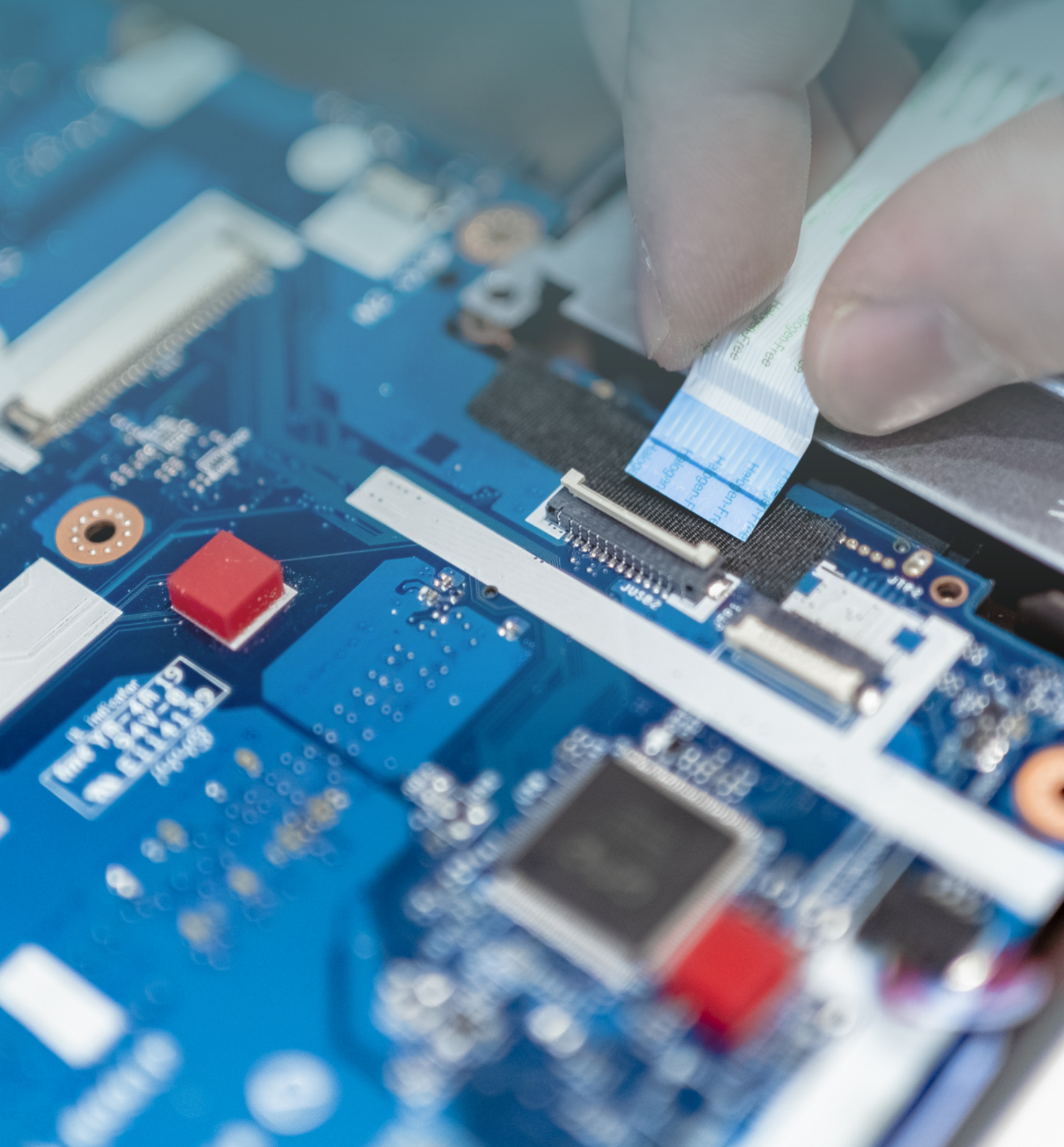
There will also be further disruptions in the market due to the ongoing supply chain issues caused by international conflict, while the increasing effects of climate change are also making an impact.

So, while we don't foresee any shortage of openings, we do think employers will adjust their hiring outlook over the year ahead to address these challenges and the ongoing talent shortages. However, any qualified candidates seeking out new opportunities won't have to look far and our team would be delighted to help assist you should you be in the market.

**Overall, we expect  
the number of  
Technical  
Engineering & Life  
Science roles to  
decrease by  
approximately 10%  
in 2024.**



# Information Technology



# Information Technology

2023 has been a year of recalibration for the IT sector. While previously, IT roles remained fairly consistent through 2022, this year brought a significant downturn in job postings – approximately 30-40% in infrastructure and 10-15% in software development. This shift reflects a market adjusting to the aftermath of the pandemic and global economic changes.

The year revealed a heightened demand for specific roles: Infrastructure Engineers, DevOps Engineers, and Python Software Developers were in high demand, highlighting an evolving preference for roles requiring advanced cognitive and problem-solving skills. In contrast, general IT Support and Java Developer roles saw a notable decrease, potentially impacted by AI advancements.

Elixir emerged as a significant new player in software programming, while the roles in Infrastructure, though unchanged in nature, trended towards more senior positions.

Overall, the sector witnessed a reduction in applications. However, there was an increase in candidates willing to relocate to Ireland, perhaps due to a lower base of job postings and a global reset in the market following widespread redundancies in major IT companies.

Hybrid working models centred around Dublin and other cities gained traction. There was a consistent demand for Software Developers and Data roles in Dublin, with a skew towards more senior roles in Infrastructure. Temporary and contract roles saw a decrease, particularly in contingent work, estimated at 40% down for temporary roles.

Salaries across many IT roles decreased, reflective of the reduced demand. However, highly qualified and experienced staff continued to command strong salaries. Software salaries remained stable, with candidates adopting more pragmatic expectations.

Remote and hybrid working arrangements remained a significant factor, with approximately 50-80% of roles offering some form of flexibility. The impact of the cost of living was strongly felt, with candidates evaluating offers more critically in light of personal expenses and lifestyle needs.





Upskilling continued to be a key consideration, with about 50% of infrastructure employers and 20% in Software offering opportunities. AI tools, including ChatGPT, were increasingly used for tasks like writing job advertisements; the expectation is that AI will alleviate the need to spend excessive time on tasks that can be automated. However, a generally conservative approach to AI means that gauging its impact on the IT sector in Ireland remains to be seen.

## Looking ahead to 2024

Looking ahead to 2024, the IT sector is expected to see an average increase of 25% in roles. Cybersecurity, Software Developers using new languages, and Data Analysts are anticipated to be in high demand. There may be a reduction in demand for regular tech support roles. Salary trends are expected to show slight increases in line with inflation.

AI is set to be a growing trend in the IT sector, though its full impact and applications are still being explored. The evolution of new software languages, alongside innovative applications of established languages like Python, is evident across the IT spectrum. Python, a long-standing language, continues to find relevance and utility among both developers and system administrators, demonstrating the sector's adaptive nature.

The demand for skilled, experienced IT professionals is expected to continue outstripping supply. However, the heightened market caution following the economic shifts of recent years is likely to restrain the rise in salaries seen in the past. The balance of power in the job market is subtly shifting, placing a premium on strategic adaptation and the ability to leverage emerging technologies like AI to stay ahead.

Overall, the sector is poised for growth, driven by the strength of both Irish IT businesses and multinational corporations.



# Commercial

**Business Support • HR • Admin • Customer  
Service • Insurance • Marketing**







## Commercial – Business Support

Given the increasing and varied nature of the employment market within the Commercial sector, we have decided to split our analysis into two parts. Accounting and Financial roles are covered in the next section of this report, beginning on page 32.

On these pages we will concentrate on roles relating to our Commercial Business Support division, including HR, Administration, Customer Service, Insurance and Marketing.

Within these diverse areas, the market varied considerably in 2023. Demand in the insurance sub-sector was strongly up, marketing was more or less level with the previous year, while HR, Administration and Customer Service roles were generally down.

Different factors impacted on each of these specific areas.

Within Insurance, there was a significant demand for personal line executives and commercial line executives. This was being driven by the new entrants into the Irish market, partially due to the merging of smaller brokers with large organisations. Qualified Financial Advisors were also being sought out by insurers, especially in Dublin and the surrounding counties.


For HR-related roles, there was a notable decline in openings for Talent Acquisition personnel. This came on the back of the wave of job losses within the tech sector at the outset of 2023. The change in headcount outlook also meant those businesses no longer required as many HR-qualified personnel to handle recruitment.

That's not to say there weren't any opportunities in HR. There were certainly openings for HR business partner-type positions. Companies were seeking more experienced and qualified candidates who could cover a myriad of duties and responsibilities, meaning the demand was for more senior personnel rather than entry-level HR staff. On a regional basis, there was a greater demand for HR talent within North Dublin, Meath, and Westmeath, with fewer openings in other parts of Leinster.

When it comes to Marketing opportunities, the openings were primarily at Marketing executive level, while there was a drop in junior positions coming on stream.

On the Administration side, there were fewer roles available for executive assistants and Office managers, with employers seeking Admin staff who could take on additional responsibilities, lessening the need for these more focused positions. There were also opportunities for Administration/Customer Service roles or Administrative Assistant/Administrator positions.

There were also some newer roles that came on the market over the course of 2023, such as Operations roles with a focus on leading people, as well as internal communications positions with a focus on sustainability.



Of course, regardless of whether there were a lot of openings or more limited opportunities in each of these sub-sectors, there was one common aspect that impacted recruitment across all these different areas – a shortage of qualified candidates.

The mood in the market was certainly impacted by the tech layoffs at the beginning of the year, with people being less willing to risk taking on new opportunities as the market started to wobble. Housing was also a key factor in keeping people in their existing roles, with many focusing on keeping their current accommodation and being unwilling to uproot, while others were waiting for mortgage approval and didn't want to alter their employment status in the midst of that process.

This overarching lack of candidates created a lot of opportunity for those who were willing to consider new roles, with many candidates quickly realising they had been dealt a powerful negotiating hand. As a result, there was a clear trend of candidates using the recruitment process to secure an enhanced salary from their current employers and then opting to stay put.

Personnel were also seeking out better conditions to reflect the rising cost of living, especially to cover expenses associated with commuting. The cost of travel also saw an increased focus on hybrid roles across most of the sub-sectors, with several roles which included a condition of full time working in the office being rejected by candidates.

Another interesting trend in the market in 2023 concerned recruitment ghosting – with candidates and clients reaching the mid-point of the recruitment process and then ceasing all engagement.





## Looking ahead to 2024

Our expectations for 2024 can be described as cautiously optimistic. The year should begin on a bright footing, with the uncertainty generated by the tech redundancies starting to fade away. If this is also reflected in the wider economic conditions, then more candidates are likely to emerge and to be seeking out fresh opportunities over the coming months.

However, this adjustment in outlook will take time and there still won't be the surplus of qualified talent available to avoid expectations regarding increased salaries. These will be further exacerbated as inflation remains an active concern and as fuel prices continue to increase.

We are forecasting the demand for insurance personnel will remain strong well into 2024, with even more new players likely to enter the market, creating openings and movement within the market. Again, we anticipate there will be strong demand for Personal Lines, Commercial Lines, and Customer Service Personnel.

We are also expecting further opportunities coming on stream within the insurance sub-sector for Marketing professionals and also IT Project Managers.

On the other side of the coin, we expect there will be less demand for Receptionists and front line, public facing office staff over the coming year.

The limited pool of candidates will also see more employers turn to specialist recruitment consultants to help address their needs.

At FRS Recruitment, our Commercial Team has a track record of finding great candidates even in challenging circumstances. If you are seeking to fill new roles in 2024 please don't hesitate to contact us - we would be delighted to help.

**Overall we  
expect the  
number of  
Commercial –  
Business  
Support roles to  
increase by  
approximately  
10% in 2024.**

# Commercial

## Accounting & Finance





## Commercial – Accounting & Finance

There was a clear drop in the number of roles available in the Commercial – Accounting and Finance sector during 2023. However, while the year-on-year analysis highlighted the decline in opportunities, it was also fair to say there were peaks and troughs during different parts of the year. As an illustration of this trend, the first 3 months of 2023 were very positive and tracking well ahead of the previous year, while there was a significant decline experienced in September.


Candidate availability was particularly challenging in this sector. This applied across multiple different areas of expertise and across multiple different skill requirements. One obvious example related to audit candidates, which experienced a severe shortage throughout the year.

Within industry, other roles where demand was strong included Financial Accountants, Tax Specialists, Accounts Assistants as well as Cost/ Pricing Accountants.

For Financial Accountant roles, employers were seeking newly qualified candidates or those with up to 3 years' experience post qualification. The Tax Specialists needed to be AITI qualified, which meant there was a major shortage of suitable options available. The Accounts Assistants being targeted were recently qualified technicians or those who had 2 years+ experience, while Cost/ Pricing Accountant opportunities were a big focus within the Manufacturing sector.

On the practice side, the major recruitment need was for candidates to work in corporate finance – sustainability. In fact, Sustainable Finance roles have become a strong area of growth, as the sector moves to adapt to the changing regulatory environment. In the case of the big accounting firms, many have been building out their sustainability teams and seeking specialists who can help companies get ready for the implementation of new European regulations in this regard.





Another developing area of demand has been the focus on candidates with digital capabilities or data analytic skills. These are becoming a need for companies of all sizes, with many smaller operations seeing the benefits of drilling down into the numbers.

The type of roles that experienced the most notable decrease in demand included Accounts Payable, Accounts Receivable and, to a certain extent, Payroll. This can be explained by the rise of companies automating this function. There are also a lot of employers seeking to utilise foreign-based personnel in India and other markets due to the strong availability of qualified candidates in those locations and the associated reduced salary costs.

Employers aren't the only ones looking abroad for opportunity. Another factor in the reduced availability of talent has been attractive options available to personnel in other parts of the world. More competitive salaries, more benefits, more responsibilities, better work-life balance, and more sunshine can create quite an appealing package. A clear sign of this has been the exodus of newly qualified accountants leaving this country and heading to Australia.

It can also be challenging for employers to bring in talent into Ireland from abroad, due to the complexities involved in immigration and work permit policies. While qualified Accountants can usually source a critical skills visa with little difficulty, the reality is not quite so smooth when it comes to filling other roles. As a result, many employers are exclusively focused on candidates with experience of working in the Irish market – which is becoming an increasingly limited pool.


As a result, middle level roles now often require a headhunting approach to be adopted for recruitment. Employers have to seek out the candidates, with the days of these positions attracting multiple applications having vanished for now.

We estimate as many as 7 out of 10 employers in this sector focus on securing talent who have previously worked in the Irish accounting environment and don't want to consider candidates without that local experience - the exception being banking employers.

With demand significantly outstripping supply, and the economy experiencing a continuing cost of living crisis, there has also been a knock-on impact on salaries. Salaries have risen by as much as a 10 – 20% standard across several positions, all within the space of a year.

'Recruitment ghosting' whereby candidates and/ or employers disappear while the recruitment process is underway has also become a trend. While people not showing up for interviews is not a new development, it has certainly become a more regular occurrence since the pandemic.





Another key trend that employers may need to watch out for is overly refining their candidate selection criteria in such a challenging market with limited availability. For example, there have been roles which have sought candidates with 10 years' experience covering certain newly emerging skillsets. Considering some of those roles did not exist 10 years' ago, this can dramatically reduce the level of applications for such roles.

## Looking Ahead to 2024

All the signs suggest that the number of opportunities will grow in 2024. The demand certainly is there, but what is still in question is how much more movement there will be in the market. We do expect that the economic conditions are more reassuring to candidates as we enter 2024 and they won't be as worried about changing roles as they were in the first half of 2023.

In terms where the demand will focus, we anticipate growing needs for Financial Accountants with 3+ years' experience, Financial Data Analysts and Sustainability Finance positions. Sustainability skillsets are likely to be especially in need as the changing regulations weigh more on the market.

The ongoing automation and move of function to other international locations will continue to impact on Accounts Payable/Accounts receivable roles which are likely to further decline over the next 12 months.

Salaries will continue to grow across the sector as candidates seek better conditions either to take on new roles or to remain with their current employers.

We are also hopeful that there will be more talent entering the market from abroad in 2024. Some of these will be in the form of qualified accountants returning home after a 1-2 year spell abroad.

We also expect to see more employers seeking to address their staff shortages by broadening their outlook and considering foreign based candidates who have relevant skills but may not have prior experience of working in the Irish market.

**Overall we expect the number of Commercial – Accounting and Finance roles to increase by approximately 12% in 2024.**



# Temporary Roles

Industrial & Commercial





# Temporary Roles – Industrial & Commercial

There are certain truths that apply to the employment market.

In times of economic difficulty, the number of temporary opportunities rise as employers seek out short-term solutions while candidates are more open to roles that don't necessarily have a longer-term employment outlook.

The reverse is true when the economy is doing well. So, with Ireland's economy having reached practically full employment, this made it a particular difficult year within the temporary market. When there are so many full-time jobs in the market, fewer candidates are open to temporary roles. The lack of available candidates means employers then must offer permanent positions to fulfil their needs.


Although the strength of the jobs' market in the country made the temporary market more challenging in 2023, that's not to say there weren't opportunities. There was a clear need for more general operatives and drivers on a nationwide basis over the last 12 months. There were also some regional fluctuations in the market – such as the demand for Clerical Officers in the public sector across the Midlands, the opening of short-term Reception and Administration roles in Dublin, or the increased need for Contact Centre positions in the Midwest and Southern regions.

There were also more industrial temporary roles across Munster, while commercial opportunities were a feature in the western region. Warehouse/ driving roles were also in significant demand in the Dublin north area.

Temporary Payroll and Account positions also emerged as an opportunity in 2023.

Less in demand were qualified Accountancy temporary staff or more junior Financial roles, while there was also an expected drop in the need for vaccination centre staff post pandemic.





Despite the move away from the Covid emergency measures, there were still significant needs for temporary solutions across the public health environment with the HSE seeking to fill roles for most of the year. However, that came to a temporary freeze once their hiring embargo kicked in towards the end of the year. We expect these openings will start to become available again throughout 2024.

Another key trend was how the cost of living was impacting the market in 2023. Roles offering pay at levels near the minimum wage became more challenging to fill as people sought more lucrative options. For example, we saw a strong movement of Childcare providers seeking to change careers and secure more lucrative employment.

While the increased costs of doing business within the Food Production sector meant there was little room for higher wages, that in turn made it more difficult for these operations to maintain their workforce.

The same issues applied to many smaller operations in general, with rising costs of doing business impacting different sectors and limiting the appeal of these businesses to candidates who were looking for more financially rewarding opportunities.

Another impact of the rising cost of living was the increased push for more remote working/ hybrid opportunities. This was significantly influenced by the rising cost of commuting due to higher fuel costs.

Candidates were also less flexible in the type of roles they were seeking. They ideally were looking for 9-5 positions and there was less interest in shift or weekend work. There was also a growing interest in 4-day weeks from candidates.

Cost of living issues also had the effect of encouraging more candidates to upskill so they could secure roles offering higher salaries. For example, there were a number of general operatives who decided to qualify as forklift operators, in machine driving or warehouse logistics and then secure work elsewhere.

Public sector opportunities also became more appealing in certain roles, following 3 recent salary increases across that sector. For example, a Receptionist in the public sector could look to receive €15 per hour, while their private sector counterparts were being offered €13 per hour for the same type of position.

Fewer retail and hospitality candidates were on the move last year as well, although this was to be expected as those sectors had already undertaken a strong recruitment drive as they emerged from the pandemic in 2022.

One other factor that impacted on the number of candidates in the temporary market was the changed outlook from students. With foreign travel back on the table, many were choosing to spend time out of country rather than take up temporary positions.



## Looking ahead to 2024

We forecast a slight increase in activity across the temporary market in 2024. Our broad expectations are that this will be a very small increase within the industrial sector, while there will be a larger jump within commercial temporary roles.

There will also be a strong increase in activity localised in Dublin.

The need for drivers will continue throughout 2024, while there are also likely to be more openings within the manufacturing and production sector. Customer service roles are also likely to be on the rise.

However, while the level of activity will be on the rise, we also expect it will be a tough year across the market. This will be primarily as a result of the increase in the minimum wage, coupled with the impact of other changes such as the increased statutory sick pay and PRSI requirements. This will make it a more difficult environment for many of the small-and medium-sized enterprises that require temporary staff to maintain their headcounts at their current levels.

The rise in the minimum wage will also have a knock-on effect on other hourly rates, with continuing cost of living pressures also applying upward pressure on salary costs.

These issues are likely to see more candidates seeking to upskill or seek out more permanent positions, while some larger employers will also look to introduce greater automation as a means of reducing their temporary headcount needs, bringing more certainty to their output.



**Overall we expect the number of Temporary – Industrial and Commercial roles to increase by approximately 10% in 2024.**

# Construction







## Construction

Housing continued to be a topic at the forefront of the public mind throughout 2023. With the economy badly in need of significantly more accommodation and funding also flowing into other forms of construction activity, the recruitment market for the construction sector was once again busy over the last 12 months.

However, the primary limitation when it comes to filling these opportunities has remained consistent over recent times – the limited supply of candidates who have the necessary construction skills.

This has also been a constraint on the level of construction activity taking place across the country. Almost every builder or contractor is busy and there is no shortage of activity – just a shortage of people who can fulfil the work.

While there were opportunities across the board, there was a particular demand for engineering roles. This applied to multiple different specialities, although it is fair to say the demand for structural engineers was even more apparent.

Solar-energy related positions also emerged as a significant area of activity over the last year, with the industry reacting to the growing focus on sustainability, while both commercial and domestic clients sought out efficiencies to reduce their energy costs.

At the other end of the scale there were fewer site foreman roles available across the market.

On a regional basis, the main urban areas were the primary locations for these construction opportunities. There was strong demand in Dublin, Cork, Limerick, and Galway as the market sought to advance a strong pipeline of project activity in these areas. Other notable regional trends included the higher demand for health and safety positions in Dublin or candidates with pharma experience in Cork.

The limited supply of qualified personnel hasn't gone unnoticed amongst the candidates and coupled with the rising cost of living this had a strong impact on salary expectations over the course of the year.

This has not been easily addressed in the construction industry, with tendered projects also having to carry the rising cost of building materials generated by disruptions to the supply chain arising out of Brexit and, especially, the war in Ukraine.

Travel to work also became an important consideration for candidates in 2023, given the higher petrol/ diesel prices experienced across the year. With remote or hybrid working not being an option in the construction sector, this resulted in increased requests for company vehicles to be provided.



## Looking ahead to 2024

There won't be any drop off in the needs of the construction market any time soon and we strongly expect there will continue to be a wide range of opportunities across the market in 2024.

Green energy and sustainability-related roles are likely to become even more in demand over the next 12 months, creating openings all across the country. We also expect to see the demand for health and safety roles increase.

The greatest challenge will be balancing the upward push for better salaries from candidates, with the need for employers to control their costs. Ultimately, though, employers need staff and that will no doubt lead to better packages being on offer as contractors of all forms seek to grow their teams in the months ahead.

**Overall we expect  
the number of  
Construction roles  
to increase by  
approximately  
10% in 2024.**



# Agriculture







## Agriculture

2023 in the Agri-food sector was marked by both challenges and significant growth. Despite global economic pressures, we saw a 10% increase in job postings, reflecting a resilient and evolving industry. The sector continued to adapt to the changing landscape, with a notable emphasis on Commercial Sales, Marketing, Customer Support, and Technical Sales roles.

The demand was especially pronounced in animal feed manufacturing, with a variety of commercial roles being sought after. The Graduate Trainee programme, with its commercial focus, also saw candidates gaining valuable experience in Supply Chain & Operations. Technical Sales Representatives and Sales Managers were in high demand, reflecting the industry's emphasis on customer relations and business development.

In marketing, roles such as Marketing Coordinators and Marketing Managers required candidates with a strong farming/agri background, indicating a preference for industry-specific expertise. Additionally, there was an increase in hiring for Customer Support staff, highlighting the importance of customer service in business growth and retention.

2023 witnessed the emergence of roles centred around Farm Sustainability Advisors, Environmental Research, Innovation, and Agri-Tech. This trend aligns with the global focus on climate change and its impact on agriculture.

While the overall level of applications remained on par with last year, there was a noticeable increase in applications from overseas, particularly when compared to nationwide applications. Counteroffers became a common trend, reflecting the competitive nature of the agri industry and candidates' growing confidence in negotiating salaries and benefits.

Client demand was higher in Leinster and Munster, areas home to major agri-food companies. Despite consistent demand across all role types, certain regions experienced a shortage of candidates, especially in Connacht.

Approximately 20-30% of roles offered some form of hybrid working, with a larger portion of roles being field-based, thus limiting remote work options. Salaries across the sector increased by 5 to 10%, driven by competitive market conditions and the cost-of-living crisis.

Interest in upskilling, particularly in areas related to climate change and sustainability, was notable among candidates. Employers, while open to upskilling, generally found that candidates in the agri sector were already investing in their professional development.



## Looking ahead to 2024

The Agri-food sector is poised for further growth in 2024, with a 40% increase in job roles anticipated. We expect continued demand in commercial, technical, advisory, research, environmental, and sustainability roles. The focus on climate change will likely spur job creation in these areas, while roles such as Agronomists may see a decline due to the impact of climate change on crop production. Salary expectations are projected to increase by 10-15%, reflecting ongoing economic pressures.

The resilience of the Agri-food sector, coupled with emerging trends in climate change, sustainability, and technology, suggests a dynamic and growing market in 2024.



# We work for you.

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