Workforce Mobility and Skills in the UK Construction Sector

Migrant Worker Report

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1 Background, Objectives and Methodology

1.1 Introduction

ConstructionSkills commissioned BMRB to undertake a survey of construction workers to provide reliable data on the nature of the workforce in the UK and the Republic of Ireland (ROI) with regard to their competence/qualification levels and the extent of occupational and geographic mobility within the workforce. This report presents the findings of the survey amongst migrant workers. Migrant workers are defined as non UK/ROI nationals (those who said they were originally from the UK/ROI or had lived all their lives in the UK/ROI were excluded).

A separate technical appendix is available, which includes a full technical report and a copy of the questionnaire used.

1.2 Key Objectives of the research

ConstructionSkills like other Sector Skills Councils, needs to understand its workforce in terms of skill levels, labour mobility and reasons for entering and leaving the workforce. In the construction industry the need for such market intelligence presents particular problems because of the project based nature of much employment, the geographical mobility required by the industry, high levels of self-employment, and the presence of multiple contractors in individual construction workplaces.

ConstructionSkills consequently faces a number of significant challenges in delivering its obligations to ensure that the training and learning infrastructures meet the needs of the industry, as reflected in the Sector Skills Agreement. Data from the workforce is clearly crucial in monitoring progress towards objectives, and in helping to shape policy and priorities for the future. To this end, the key objectives of the research were:

- to examine the qualification and skill levels of the construction workforce in the UK and ROI

- to identify, quantify and analyse the extent to which the workforce in each nation/region is constituted of workers originating or leaving in other parts of the UK/ROI (or further afield), and general mobility and travel to work

- to examine the nature of the mobile workforce/‘imported’ workforce in terms of their occupations and their competence/qualification levels

- examine the scale and extent of occupational mobility within the construction workforce to see how workers in construction occupations change or keep their occupations over time, both within construction and as they move out of the industry, and related to this the extent to which managers have received training specifically to enhance their managerial skills

- to contribute to developing better methodologies for understanding and modelling the labour market impacts of the workforce mobility.

The focus for the survey was on site-based manual occupations, thus excluding associated clerical and sales occupations and professions such as architects, surveyors and engineers.

1.3 Methodology

The key elements of the research approach were as follows:

1.3.1 Desk research

Prior to undertaking primary research a period of exploratory desk-based research was undertaken to examine the scope of information currently available; to identify other surveys and consultations to ascertain what can be learnt from these, and to ensure that any subsequent fieldwork was relevant and informed. The conclusions drawn from the desk research exercise were:

- there are studies covering similar issues to this study, however the target respondents of these studies tended to be employers
- the Labour Force Survey (LFS) is conducted among workers and covers similar issues as this study, however it is not specific to the construction industry
- there is little reliable information on the mobility of workers. The only exception is the LFS but it does not cover certain issues relevant to the construction workforce such as temporary accommodation, or where workers received training
- the desk research confirmed the need for detailed information from construction workers and for more information on workforce mobility in the UK and ROI.

A copy of the presentation summarising the desk research exercise can be found in the technical appendix.

1.3.2 Sampling

For the UK sample, a list of current construction projects over £250,000 in value was drawn from Glenigan, an Emap service detailing current and forthcoming construction projects in the UK.

From the projects identified as being eligible for inclusion in the survey (the steps taken to select eligible records from Glenigan are detailed in the technical report), a stratified random sample of 99 postcode districts (e.g. NR2) was drawn to produce a representative sample of locations across the UK. For each selected district six eligible projects were identified. Projects were selected on the basis of value, 35% of sites with a value of less than £1 million and 65% of sites with a value of more than £1 million. In 2004, the survey focused on sites valued at over £1 million and the sampling process aimed to ensure a mix of sites by stage of development (first six months, midway, last six months). In 2007 the requirement was to also sample sites under £1 million, so this criterion needed to be reconsidered in that light. The 2004 definition of stage of development clearly assumed quite large, lengthy projects, appropriate for sites with minimum value of £ million. With the introduction of smaller sites, some would be completely finished in six months. Therefore it was decided that an appropriate alternative definition would be to select according to value.

Quotas were set on the target number of sites for each region and by value. The target sample profile is described in the technical report.

Glenigan details UK-based projects only, therefore an alternative sample source was required for the ROI element of the research. The most appropriate route to the construction workforce in ROI was found to be through interviewing Safe Pass[1] awareness training attendees. Safe Pass is a one day safety awareness programme aimed at all who work on construction sites.

1.3.3 Telephone survey

A telephone willingness stage was conducted in order to recruit construction projects selected from Glenigan to take part in the research. Interviewers were instructed to identify the best person to speak to about arranging a visit to the construction site and to collect some headline information about the site. Full details of the information collected and number of interviews achieved is included in the technical report.

1.3.4 Site visits

Once permission had been sought to interview at the particular site, the information was forwarded to a local face-to-face interviewer who contacted the site representative to arrange a date to visit. Interviews with construction workers were then conducted face-to-face on site. Interviewing normally took place in a canteen or site office during workers' break periods. In around one in ten cases interviewers were only able to visit the site if they supplied their own personal protective equipment.

A selection of interviewers' experiences of contacting and visiting sites is shown in the technical report.

1.3.5 ROI fieldwork

Safe Pass courses run throughout the year across ROI with on average 20 people attending each session. Interviewers attended 21 sessions in a range of locations across ROI. Two interviewers visited each session at the start of the day and distributed questionnaires to all eligible attendees who agreed to complete a questionnaire. Course attendees completed their own questionnaire and interviewers were on hand to answer any queries that arose. In total 256 questionnaires were completed.

1.3.6 Challenges

Given the complex nature of this research project a number of challenges arose during the life of the project. Each issue is discussed in detail in the technical report.

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[1] The Safe Pass Health and Safety Awareness Training Programme is a one-day programme run by Floras Ásana Saothair (FÁS), the Republic of Ireland's national training and employment authority. Safe Pass aims to ensure that all construction workers in Ireland have a basic knowledge of health and safety. This is to enable them to work on construction sites without being a risk to themselves or others who might be affected by their actions.

1.4 Details of sites covered in the research

The following table shows the split by nation/region both in terms of the number of sites covered and the number of interviews achieved. At the analysis stage, weighting was applied to the data to ensure each nation/region was represented in its correct proportions based on the relative size of the construction workforce. Labour Force Survey figures were used for UK regions/areas, (average profiles from the period October 2006 – June 2007) and for ROI, figures were supplied from the Central Office Statistics (average profile from April 2006 – March 2007). The resulting weighted profile is shown in the right hand column of table 1.1.

Table 1.1 Interviewing by nation/region

	Number of sites	Number of interviews	Profile once weighted (%)
Overall	**312**	**3,877**	**100**
East Midlands	27	304	7
East of England	24	314	10
London	21	355	9
North East	32	427	4
North West	26	342	9
Northern Ireland	23	263	3
Republic of Ireland	20	256	11
Scotland	21	240	8
South East	26	331	12
South West	24	255	8
Wales	21	293	5
West Midlands	24	262	7
Yorkshire and Humber	23	235	8

NB: ROI interviewing was conducted among workers attending Safe Pass training sessions.

The figures show that on average 12 workers were interviewed per site (the minimum limit set when arranging a site visit was 10 workers).

Table 1.2 shows that the majority of sites visited had fewer than 50 workers on site.

Table 1.2 Sites covered by number of workers on site	
	Number of sites (UK)
Total	**292**
10	9
11–25	154
26–50	85
51–99	24
100–199	20

Figures from the site managers interviewed at the telephone fieldwork stage indicated that there were 10,846 workers across the 292 sites visited in the UK. Using this figure it would appear that around 35% of the potential workforce took part in the research, however it should be noted that there were instances where on the day the site was visited fewer workers were present than indicated by the site manager when first contacted. This was due to a number of factors, for example the site may have entered into another phase of the project by the time the interviewer was able to visit the site.

The proportion of workers interviewed varied greatly, at some sites we interviewed all workers present, on other sites, particularly where interviewing only occurred during short break times only, a small proportion of workers were interviewed.

Table 1.3 shows the profile of the sites in our sample by the type of work being undertaken and then the number of interviews carried out. The bulk of the sites were housing (mainly new housing) projects.

Table 1.3 Sites covered by type of activity		
	Number of sites (UK only)	Number of interviews
Total	**292**	**3,402**
New housing	172	2,182
Public non-housing	67	517
Private commercial	26	345
Infrastructure	12	129
Private industrial	15	229

1.5 Structure of the report

The report is structured as follows:

Chapter 1 Background, Objectives and Methodology

Chapter 2 Management Summary

Chapter 3 Mobility

Chapter 4 Profile, Work Status and Work Histories of the Construction Workforce

Chapter 5 Qualifications and Skills

A separate technical report has been produced.

1.6 Notes on tables

Where respondents can give multiple responses to a question, the sum of the individual responses may be greater than 100 per cent.

Also the percentages in the tables do not always sum to 100 per cent due to rounding, and where percentages in the text differ to the sum of percentages in the tables, this too will be due to rounding.

An asterisk (*) in a table signifies a percentage that is greater than 0 but less than 0.5.

A dash (-) signifies a cell where data has not been included due to too small a base size.

N/A in a table signifies where we are unable to make a comparison with previous years as either the question wasn't asked or the data wasn't available.

With the exception of base totals the figures referred to are weighted.

The report contains some tables showing findings based on relatively small numbers of respondents (less than 70). Such low base sizes carry a greater risk of these figures being unrepresentative of the population in question and should therefore be treated as indicative only. Consistent with the 2004 report, only results based on 15 workers or more have been referenced in either tables or the text.

2 Management Summary

ConstructionSkills commissioned BMRB to undertake a survey of construction workers to provide reliable data on the nature of the workforce in the UK and the Republic of Ireland (ROI) with regard to their competence/qualification levels and the extent of occupational and geographic mobility within the workforce.

The survey results presented in this summary are based on fieldwork conducted with migrant workers (non UK/ROI nationals) from February to July 2007. This consisted of a total of 200 face-to-face interviews with site-based workers obtained across 292 sites in Great Britain and 66 interviews with Safe Pass attendees in the Republic of Ireland.

This summary highlights the key findings for each of the major themes covered.

Detailed results are available in the body of the full report, and a full technical report is available containing full details of sampling and methodology.

2.1 Mobility

Just under a tenth (8%) of the construction workforce was accounted for by migrants. The proportion of migrant workers within each region did, however, differ greatly. Just over a quarter of workers interviewed in the Republic of Ireland and London were migrants, while 8% of workers in the South East and 7% in the East of England came from abroad. However, migrants did not make up more than 3% of the workforce of any of the other regions.

Migrant workers in the Republic of Ireland were almost exclusively Polish or Lithuanian. UK migrant workers were more cosmopolitan although Eastern Europeans were still the largest group.

Migrant workers in ROI were highly likely to live in temporary accommodation (52%). In comparison only just over a tenth (12%) of UK migrant workers lived in temporary accommodation although they were still twice as likely to do so than the overall workforce in the UK (6% lived in temporary accommodation).

The mean number of miles travelled to work (distance from home to work) by migrants was 19, which is shorter than the UK and ROI average of 24 miles. Migrant workers were also more likely to travel less than five miles to work (45% of migrants vs. 24% of the overall workforce).

The relatively short time that migrants are on site is a potential barrier to the uptake and delivery of training. They were around half as likely as the overall workforce to say that they would spend more than six months at their current site (19% vs. 37%). A high proportion of migrants (one in three) said they did not know how long they would be on their current site, reflecting the fact that a higher proportion of migrant workers were in temporary positions than the overall workforce.

Migrant workers were more likely to have only worked on one type of project during their career than the overall workforce, probably as they tended to be younger and have less experience. Migrant workers were slightly more likely to have worked on housing repair and maintenance projects than those from the UK and ROI.

2.2 The profile of the workforce

Migrant workers had a younger profile than the overall workforce as a whole. Less than a quarter (23%) were aged over 34 compared to half (51%) of the overall workforce.

Compared with the overall workforce migrants were more likely to be labourer/operatives (30% of migrants vs. 17% of the overall workforce), carpenters/joiners (17% vs. 14%) and dry-liners/plasterers (10% vs. 5%). Considering their relatively young profile and lack of experience they have had in the industry it is not surprising that labouring is the most likely role for migrant workers.

Migrant workers were less likely to be employed directly by a company (45% vs. 64% of the overall workforce) but slightly more likely to be self-employed (34% vs. 29%) and to work for an agency (11% vs. 5%).

2.3 Training and Qualifications

In the UK, migrant construction workers were slightly less likely to hold a skill card or certificate than the overall workforce. Almost two-thirds (64%) had one compared to nearly three-quarters (72%) of all workers across the UK.

Just 16% of migrant workers had a formal qualification relevant to construction compared to almost half (48%) of the overall workforce. Around three-fifths of those that did have a qualification had studied or trained for it in the UK.

Only 6% of migrant workers had managerial or supervisory duties on site compared to 18% of the overall workforce. Again, the younger, less experienced profile of migrant workers will mean they are less likely to be placed in managerial or supervisory positions.

As well as being less likely to have a formal qualification migrants were also less likely to be working towards one (10% vs. 17% of the overall workforce).

Migrants were less likely to say they had all the skills needed for their current job than the overall workforce (64% of migrants vs. 76% of the overall workforce). However, they were more likely to say that they needed more experience than qualifications. Only around a tenth of those without any qualifications said they needed more training or qualifications, while a third said they needed more experience.

Migrant workers were, however, more likely than the overall workforce to say that they needed training in basic skills (61% vs. 24%). The demand for additional training mainly centred on language skills with four-fifths wanting to improve their spoken English and two-fifths reading and writing respectively.

The potential demand for training from those who are looking to change their roles within the construction industry is similar for migrant workers as for the overall workforce. Around one in six migrants (17%) said they would like to change their role (compared to 14% of the overall workforce). The vast majority of them (76%) said that they would need further training and qualifications for their prospective new role.

3 Mobility

A key aim of the survey is to gain an understanding of geographic mobility of construction workers and to try to get a measure of which regions are net ‘importers’ and which are net ‘exporters’. Another aim is to identify which types of workers (for example, by occupation and competence/qualification level) are particularly likely to be mobile. The results from this analysis clearly have a bearing on training planning, provision and investment.

What constitutes a mobile worker is not straightforward. Potentially it includes those who live outside a region and travel in on a daily basis, those who live in temporary accommodation while working but whose permanent address is outside the region, those who have moved to the area on a semi-permanent basis, as well as those who received their construction training elsewhere but have now moved to the region on a permanent basis. Hence for the survey, a number of questions were asked covering these issues. These were:

- where respondents were from originally
- whether they travel from their permanent address or a temporary address (and if temporary why they work in the current region)
- the proportion of their time working in construction which has been on sites within the region where they are currently working
- the miles they travel to get to the site each day
- whether, whenn they finish this site they expect to get a job which allows them to commute on a daily basis from their permanent address.

These areas are discussed in turn. In the last section we also look at how long workers are typically based at an individual site to give some idea of the frequency of moving between sites. Clearly workers may have spent their whole working life in one region and therefore appear relatively immobile, but if they move site frequently, providing training to these workers could be problematic.

3.1 Worker origin

Migrant construction workers accounted for 8% of the construction workforce interviewed across the UK and ROI. Table 3.1 shows how they were distributed by region:

Table 3.1 Region currently working			
	Migrants **%**	Overall Workforce (UK/ROI) %	Proportion of work force accounted for by migrants %
Republic of Ireland	**34**	11	**26**
London	**30**	9	**27**
South East	**12**	12	**8**
East of England	**8**	9	**7**
Scotland	**3**	8	**3**
West Midlands	**3**	7	**3**
North West	**2**	9	**2**
Wales	**2**	5	**3**
Yorkshire and Humber	**2**	8	**2**
East Midlands	**2**	6	**2**
North East	**1**	4	**2**
South West	**1**	8	**1**
Northern Ireland	**1**	3	**2**
Base: Migrants (266); Overall workforce (3,877)			

The Republic of Ireland and London were the areas where construction workers were most likely to have originated from outside the UK and ROI. Around one in three migrant workers interviewed were based in ROI while almost as high a proportion (30%) worked in London. Migrant workers accounted for just over a quarter of the construction workforce in both ROI and London.

The South East and East of England also had a relatively high level of workers from outside the UK and ROI with 8% of the construction workforce in the South East and 7% in the East of England accounted for by migrants. None of the other regions saw a level of migrant workers higher than 3%.

Table 3.2 Migrants' country of origin	
	All migrants %
Poland	**42**
Lithuania	**17**
Romania	**8**
Africa	**7**
Kosovo	**5**
India	**5**
Albania	**4**
Caribbean	**3**
Bulgaria	**2**
Australia	**2**
Germany	**2**
New Zealand	**2**
Ukraine	**1**
Canada	**1**
Base: Migrants (266)	

Migrant workers are predominantly from Poland with two out of five being Polish. The proportion of migrant workers in the ROI that were Polish was around twice as high as for the UK with 65% of migrant workers in the Republic being Polish compared to 30% in the UK.

Lithuanians were the second most highly represented nationality. Again, migrant workers in the ROI were more likely to come from Lithuania than those in the UK (29% of migrants in the ROI compared to 11% in the UK).

Therefore, although the construction workforce interviewed in ROI included a high proportion of migrants, virtually all of them came from either Poland or Lithuania. In contrast, UK migrant workers were much more cosmopolitan although Eastern Europeans were still the largest group.

3.2 Temporary accommodation

Unsurprisingly, migrant workers were more likely to live in temporary accommodation. Around one in four (26%) did so, compared to 7% of all construction workers across the UK and ROI.

However, those working in ROI were even more likely to live in temporary accommodation with just over half (52%) doing so. In comparison just 12% of migrants working in the UK were living at a temporary address.

3.3 Proportion of career spent in current location

Workers were asked what proportion of the time they had worked in construction in the UK/ROI had been spent on sites in the nation/region where they were currently working.

Migrant workers were more likely than the overall workforce to say their current job is the only one they have done within the region they are working (8% of migrant workers said this was the case compared to 3% of the overall workforce).

Although migrant workers were almost as likely as the overall workforce to say they have spent their entire career in their current region it should be remembered that migrant workers had, on average, worked within the industry for less time.

Table 3.3 Proportion of construction career spent in current region

	Migrants %	Overall Workforce (UK/ROI) %
All of it	**37**	43
Most of it	**22**	33
Around half	**8**	9
Small proportion	**10**	8
Only this job	**8**	3
Don't know	**14**	3

Base: Migrants (266); Overall workforce (3,877)

3.4 Travel to work distances

The mean number of miles travelled to work (distance from home to work) by migrant workers was 19 miles, shorter than the UK and ROI average of 24 miles. Migrant workers were also almost twice as likely as the overall workforce to travel less than five miles to work (45% of migrants vs. 24% of the overall workforce). This is consistent with the greater likelihood of migrants living in temporary accommodation which is likely to be close to the job.

3.5 Current site duration and likely location of future sites

Workers were asked how long they expect in total to work at the current site. Table 3.4 shows results among migrants and all workers.

Table 3.4 Total length of time expect to work at site

	Migrants %	Overall Workforce (UK/ROI) %
<1 month	**13**	11
1–3 months	**21**	20
>3 up to 6 months	**15**	16
>6 months up to a year	**8**	17
More than a year	**11**	20
Don't know	**33**	17

Base: Migrants (266); Overall workforce (3,877)

Migrant workers appeared less likely to spend longer times on a single site. The proportion that said they expected to spend more than six months at their current site was around half the level as for the overall workforce (19% vs. 37%).

A third of migrants also say that they didn't know how long they would be on the current site. We might expect this as a higher proportion of migrant workers are in temporary rather than permanent positions.

3.6 Sub-sector mobility

All workers were asked whether they had spent significant parts of their construction career on any of the following types of project: new housing; housing repair and maintenance; commercial work such as shops, offices, pubs etc.; private industrial such as warehousing, land reclamation etc.; public non-housing such as schools, landscaping etc. and infrastructure such as road, tunnel etc. Results are summarised in table 3.5.

Table 3.5 Type of projects spent significant periods of construction career on		
	Migrants %	Overall Workforce (UK/ROI) %
New Housing	**62**	73
Housing repair and maintenance	**40**	38
Commercial work	**33**	43
Public non-housing	**27**	44
Private industrial	**16**	33
Infrastructure	**14**	21
One type of project only	**46**	34
Two types of project only	**20**	19
Three types of project only	**10**	15
Four types of project only	**7**	12
Five types of project only	**6**	11
Worked on all six types of project	**3**	6
Base: Migrants (266); Overall workforce (3,877)		

Migrants tend to have spent less time in the industry than indigenous workers, which is reflected in the fact that they were more likely to have worked on just one type of project during their career.

As for the overall workforce, migrants were most likely to have worked on new housing projects. They were slightly more likely than all workers across the UK and ROI to have been involved in housing repair and maintenance projects.

3.7 Leaving the industry

A final measure of mobility is the anticipated outflow from the workforce i.e. those leaving the industry. The results for workers aged below 60 are shown in table 3.6.

Table 3.6 Likelihood of working in construction in 5 years time

	Migrants **%**	Overall Workforce (UK/ROI) %
Definitely will	**38**	44
Very likely	**23**	32
Quite l kely	**11**	10
Quite unlikely	**1**	2
Very unlikely	**1**	2
Definitely will not	**5**	2
Hope to be retired	**2**	2
Don't know	**18**	6

Base: Migrant workers aged under 60 (264); All respondents aged under 60 (3,686)

Migrants were a little less likely to say they definitely will, or are very likely to be working in construction, in five years time than the overall workforce. However, the major difference between migrant workers and the overall workforce is that they were three times as likely not to know their propensity to be in the industry in five years time (18% said they did not know how likely it was that they would be working in construction in five years time).

4 Profile, Work Status and Work Histories of the Construction Workforce

In this chapter we look at the demographic details of the construction workers interviewed in terms of age, ethnicity and gender. We also look at the proportion working directly for a company, self-employed or for an agency, and the extent to which they are working on a permanent or temporary basis. We also look at the occupational profile of the sample and examine career histories in terms of how many years they have worked in construction and the previous roles workers have had within the sector.

4.1 Demographic profile of the sample

The following table shows the demographic profile of migrant workers compared to the profile of the overall workforce interviewed in the survey.

Table 4.1 Demographic profile of the sample

	Migrants **%**	Overall Workforce (UK/ROI) %
Age: 16–19	**6**	8
20–24	**25**	16
25–34	**46**	25
35–44	**13**	25
45–54	**7**	16
55+	**3**	10
Ethnicity: White	**84**	96
Black	**7**	2
Asian	**6**	1
Other	*	1
Gender: Male	**98**	99
Female	*	*
Base: Migrants (266); Overall workforce (3,877)		

Migrant workers had a younger age profile than the overall workforce with only a tenth aged 45 or older.

Although construction workers from abroad were more likely to be BME than the overall workforce, it is still the case that the vast majority (84%) of migrant workers were white.

There was little difference between the migrant and overall workforce with regard to gender with both groups virtually all male.

4.2 Work status

Although migrant workers were most likely to be employed by a company, less than half (45%) of them were, compared to around two-thirds (64%) of the overall workforce.

Migrants were more likely to be self-employed than the overall workforce (34% of migrants vs. 29% of the overall workforce). Almost half (46%) of foreign workers with at least three years experience were self-employed.

Also, agency workers accounted for twice as high a proportion of migrant workers than is the case for the overall workforce (11% vs. 5%).

Table 4.2 Work status

			Years working in construction			
	Migrants %	Overall Workforce (UK/ROI) %	<1 year %	1–2 %	3–4 %	5+ %
Employed by a company	**45**	64	61	39	42	35
Self-employed	**34**	29	15	35	46	46
Work for an agency	**11**	5	11	9	5	15
Unemployed (all ROI)	**7**	1	13	5	8	2

Base: Migrants (266); Overall workforce (3,877)

Table 4.3 below shows the occupations where the incidence of self-employment is particularly high or low for migrant workers.

Table 4.3 Level of self employment by occupation

High	**Low**
Plasterers/Dry-liners (61%)	Labourers/General Operatives (29%)
Carpenters/Joiners (50%)	Bricklayers (23%)

Owing to low base sizes in a number of occupations, only those occupations where we interviewed 15 or more workers have been referenced.

Plasterers/dry-liners and carpenters/joiners were the most likely occupations to be self-employed. Unlike the overall workforce, migrants working as bricklayers were relatively unlikely to be self-employed.

4.3 Occupational profile

Table 4.4 below shows how migrant construction workers classified their current role or occupation.

Migrant workers were most likely to be labourer/operatives with almost one in three (30%) in this role compared to 17% of the overall workforce. Considering their relatively young profile and the lack of experience they tend to have had in the industry it is unsurprising that labouring was the most likely role for migrant workers.

Migrant workers were also slightly more likely to be carpenters/joiners (17% of migrants vs. 14% of the overall workforce) and plasterers/dry-liners (10% vs. 5%). They were much less likely to be plumbers with only one migrant worker classifying themselves as a plumber compared to 5% of the overall sample.

Table 4.4 Occupational Profile		
	Migrants **%** **(No.)**	Overall Workforce (UK/ROI) % (No.)
Labourer/General Operative	**30** **(85)**	17 (674)
Carpenter/Joiner	**17** **(45)**	14 (559)
Plasterer/Dry-liner	**10** **(29)**	5 (190)
Bricklayer	**9** **(23)**	13 (536)
Plant/Machine Operative	**7** **(18)**	13 (502)
Ceiling Fixer	**4** **(8)**	1 (27)
Painter/Decorator	**3** **(7)**	2 (97)
Electrician	**3** **(7)**	7 (247)
Roofer	**3** **(7)**	4 (133)
Non-construction Operative	**3** **(8)**	1 (32)
Scaffolder	**2** **(7)**	3 (112)
Floorer	**2** **(5)**	1 (41)
Supervisor	**2** **(6)**	5 (192)
Welder	**2** **(4)**	1 (32)
Manager	**2** **(4)**	3 (111)
Mechanical Fitter	**1** **(3)**	* (16)
Pipe Fitter	**1** **(3)**	3 (102)
Banksman/Banksperson	**1** **(3)**	2 (81)
Steel Erector/Rigger	**1** **(2)**	2 (75)
Civil Engineering Operative	**1** **(3)**	2 (75)
Technical	**1** **(2)**	1 (38)
Glazier	***** **(2)**	1 (32)
Plumber	***** **(1)**	5 (183)
Base: Migrants (266); Overall workforce (3,877)		

4.4 Years working in construction

Reflecting their young profile, construction workers from abroad were around three times as likely to have spent less than a year in the industry as the overall workforce (32% vs. 11%). Only 5% had spent more than 20 years in the industry.

The table below summarises the results using cumulative proportions:

Table 4.5 Years spent working in construction (cumulative)		
	Migrants %	Overall Workforce (UK/ROI) %
Less than 6 months	**15**	5
A year or less	**32**	11
2 years or less	**43**	17
5 years or less	**64**	33
10 years or less	**82**	50
20 years or less	**93**	71
More than 20 years	**5**	27
Base: Migrants (266); Overall workforce (3,877)		

4.4.1 Construction employment

Just under two-fifths (39%) of migrant construction workers ended up in construction after working in another field, a similar proportion to the overall workforce.

Of those who did not start in construction, the majority (69%) had worked only in construction since joining the industry. Migrant workers were slightly more likely than the overall workforce to have dipped in and out of the industry (20% vs. 15%). Foreign workers were also more likely to have had periods of unemployment since joining the industry than the workforce as a whole with 11% having worked only in construction jobs but having periods of unemployment between jobs (compared to 6% of the overall workforce).

4.4.2 Occupational switching and progression

An area of particular interest in the research was the extent of switching between occupations within construction. To this end workers were asked if they had always worked in their current role/occupation and if not, what their previous occupation had been.

Migrant construction workers were as likely to have always had the same trade as the overall workforce (57% had always had the same trade vs. 60% of the overall workforce) although as migrant workers tend to have spent less time in the industry the level of switching between roles can be seen as relatively high.

5 Qualifications and Skills

A key objective of this research was to measure the competence/qualification levels of the construction workforce. A number of questions were asked to ascertain this:

- whether any construction skill certificate or card was held and if so which and, in the case of CSCS and CSR cards, to what level

- what formal qualifications relevant to the construction industry they held or were working towards, if any

- those with managerial or supervisory duties were asked about any training specifically designed to improve their managerial or supervisory skills or knowledge.

We also asked workers to assess their own skills, including basic skills and whether they felt they needed more training to do their current job.

5.1 Construction skill cards and certificates

There is a general move in the industry for all persons working on, or visiting construction sites, to have a construction skill card or certificate. Already, many sites will not let workers on without an appropriate card to prove their skills and health and safety competency. And this is set to increase as the industry-wide deadline approaches for a fully qualified workforce by 2010.

The proportion of migrant workers holding a skill card or certificate was 49%, lower than for the overall workforce (68%). One reason for this difference is the high proportion of migrant workers in the ROI where ownership of skill cards/certificates was lower. Looking at the UK alone, 64% of migrant workers had a skill card or certificate compared to 72% of the overall workforce.

However, self-employed migrant workers were as likely to hold a skill card or certificate as all self-employed workers and migrant agency workers were only slightly less likely to hold one than all agency workers. The biggest difference is seen for employed workers where migrant workers are only around half as likely to have a skill card or certificate as all employed workers (36% vs. 70%).

Table 5.1 Whether have a skill card/certificate by other variables		
	Migrants **%**	Overall Workforce (UK/ROI) **%**
Overall	**49**	68
<1 year in construction	**28**	39
1–2 years	**51**	60
3–4 years	**72**	65
5+ years	**59**	75
16–19	**31**	43
20–24	**41**	62
25–44	**57**	73
45+	**32**	72
Employed directly	**36**	70
Self-employed	**70**	69
Agency worker	**51**	62
Base: Migrants (266); Overall workforce (3,877)		

The main differences by occupation are shown in the following table which lists occupations with the highest and lowest penetrations:

Table 5.2 Whether have a skill card/certificate by occupation	
***High** likelihood*	***Low** likelihood*
Plant/Machine Operatives (62%) **Plasterers/Dry-liners (57%)** **Carpenters/Joiners (55%)**	**Bricklayers (16%)**

Plant/machine operatives, plasterers/dry-liners and carpenters/joiners were the most likely occupations to have a skill card or certificate. However, migrant bricklayers were very unlikely to have one (just one in six did).

Table 5.3 Type of skill card / certificate held

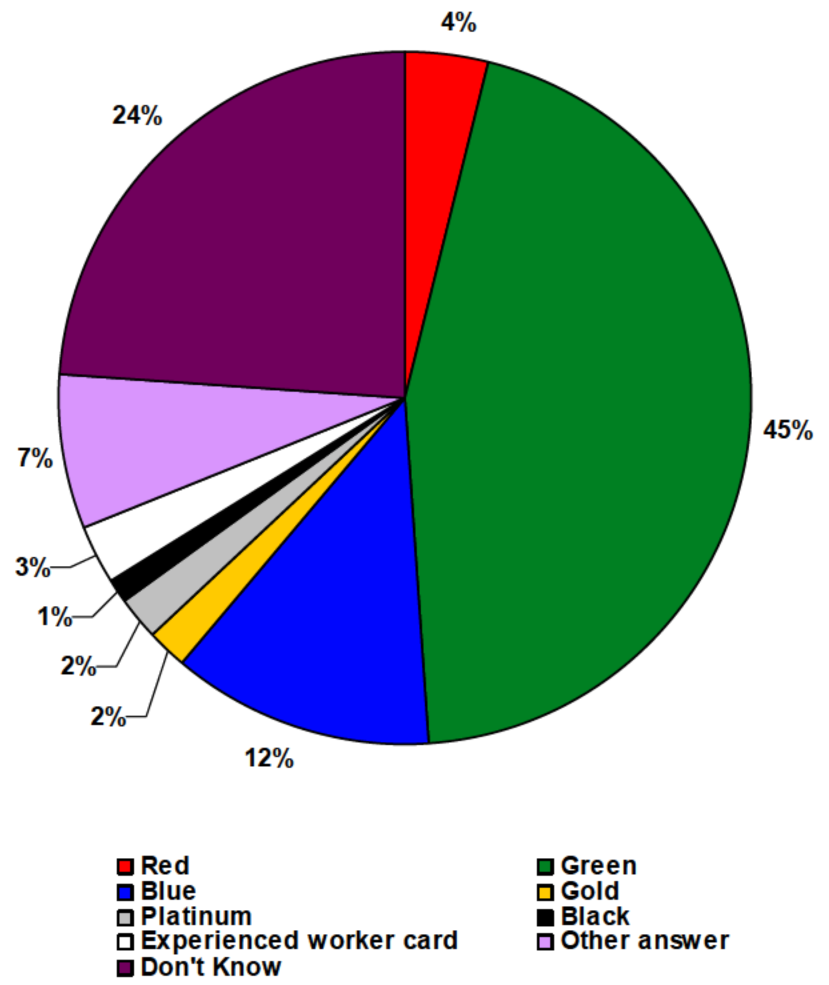
	Migrants **%**	Overall Workforce (UK/ROI) %
CSCS (ConstructionSkills Certification Scheme) (GB) or CSR (Northern Ireland)	**41**	55
Safe Pass	**7**	5
CPCS (Construction Plant Competence Scheme)	**2**	10
Trade specific certificate/card	**1**	3
No cards held/not sure	**51**	32

Base: Migrants (266); Overall workforce (3,877)

As for the overall workforce, migrants were most likely to hold a CSCS/CSR card. However, they were much less likely to hold a CPCS card (2% vs. 10% of the overall workforce).

Workers who said they had a CSCS or CSR skill card were also asked its colour/level. The results are shown in chart 5.1 and table 5.4 respectively.

Chart 5.1 Colour of CSCS/CSR skill card held



Base: Migrants holding a CSCS or CSR card (123)

Table 5.4 Type of CSCS/CSR card		
	Migrants %	Overall Workforce (UK/ROI) %
Red (trainee)	**4**	6
Green (construction site operative card for general site workers)	**45**	21
Blue (skilled/NVQ/SVQ Level 2)	**12**	25
Gold (supervisor/NVQ/SVQ Level 3)	**2**	16
Platinum (manager/NVQ/SVQ Level 4)	**2**	3
Black (NVQ/SVQ Level 5)	**1**	1
Experienced worker card for unqualified but competent workers	**3**	1
Other answers	**7**	7
Don't know	**24**	20
Base: All holding a CSCS or CSR card (Migrants 123; Overall workforce 2,117)		

Migrants holding a CSCS or CSR card were around twice as likely, as all who own this type of card, to have a green card. This reflects the high proportion of migrant workers in unskilled roles.

5.2 Construction qualifications held

Having been asked to describe which skill card or certificate they had obtained (if any), workers were also asked what other formal qualifications relevant to construction they held (excluding first aid certificates). Just 16% of migrant workers held one of these qualifications compared to almost half (48%) of the overall workforce.

Table 5.5 Hold any construction specific qualification

	Migrants %	Overall Workforce (UK/ROI) %
Overall	**16**	48
<1 year in construction	**10**	15
1–2 years	**8**	30
3–4 years	**8**	39
5+ years	**26**	57
16–24	**12**	36
25–44	**18**	54
45+	**12**	50
Employed directly	**18**	48
Self-employed	**14**	54
Agency worker	**21**	30

Base: Migrants (266); Overall workforce (3,877)

As for the overall workforce, migrant workers with more than five years experience were the most likely to have construction specific qualifications although only a quarter (26%) of this group had one. Unlike skill cards and certificates, self-employed workers were not more likely to hold one of these qualifications than those who were employed directly.

Table 5.6 Whether have construction qualifications

***High** likelihood*	***Low** likelihood*
Carpenters/Joiners (20%)	**Labourers/General Operatives (5%)** **Plasterers/Dry-liners (11%)**

Carpenters/joiners were the most likely to have construction qualifications although only a fifth in this occupation had one.

Workers who said they had a construction qualification were asked what type of qualification they held. Where more than one response was given the highest qualification was recorded.

Table 5.7 Main type of highest qualification held		
	Migrants %	Overall Workforce (UK/ROI) %
NVQ/SVQ	**61**	51
City and Guilds	**17**	34
HNC/HND/BTEC higher	**4**	1
Apprenticeship	**1**	4
Degree	**1**	1
Construction Award	**-**	2
Base: All with a qualification (Migrants 41; All UK/ROI respondents 1,810)		

As for all those with a qualification migrant workers were most likely to have an NVQ/SVQ. However, there were half as likely to hold a City and Guilds (17% had one compared to 34% of the overall workforce).

Around three-fifths of foreign workers with a construction qualification had studied or trained for it within the UK.

5.3 Working towards construction qualifications

Migrant workers were less likely than average to be working towards a construction specific qualification (10% compared with 17% across the UK and ROI).

Table 5.8 Working towards a construction specific qualification		
	Migrants %	Overall Workforce (UK/ROI) %
Overall	**10**	17
<1 year in construction	**14**	28
1–2 years	**-**	32
3–4 years	**7**	36
5+ years	**11**	11
16–19	**-**	47
20–24	**10**	27
25+	**11**	12
Base: Migrants (266); Overall workforce (3,877)		

Unlike the overall workforce, younger, less experienced migrant workers were not particularly more likely to be working towards a qualification than older, more experienced workers.

5.4 Managerial qualifications

A further area of investigation in relation to training and qualifications was to look at the extent to which workers with managerial or supervisory duties have had training specifically designed to improve their managerial and supervisory skills.

Just 6% of migrant workers were supervisors or managers at their current site. This compares to 18% of the overall workforce. The younger, less experienced profile of migrant workers will mean they are less likely to be placed in managerial or supervisory positions.

Two-thirds of these workers with managerial responsibilities had received training specifically designed to improve their managerial and supervisory skills.

5.5 Summary of qualification and skills card status

Table 5.9 summarises the situation regarding qualifications and skill cards/certificates attained and working towards.

Table 5.9 Qualification status

	Migrants %	Overall Workforce (UK/ROI) %
Hold a formal construction qualification or a skills card/certificate or working towards a qualification	**56**	82
Hold a formal construction qualification or a skills card/certificate	**54**	78
Hold a skills card/certificate	**49**	68
Hold a skills card/certificate but no other construction qualification	**39**	33
Working towards a qualification	**10**	17

Base: Migrants (266); Overall workforce (3,877)

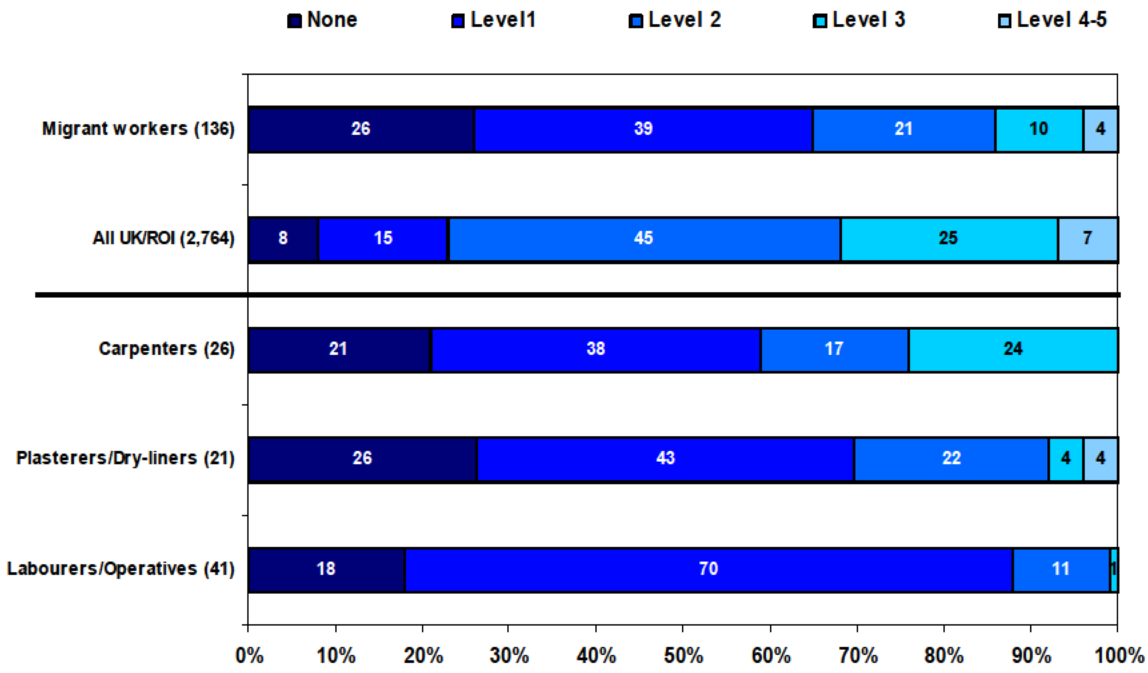
The migrant workforce was less skilled with only just over half of migrants holding a construction qualification of any sort compared to over four-fifths of the overall workforce.

5.6 Competence/qualification level of the construction workforce

Using the responses given by workers for qualifications and skill cards/certificates held and managerial training undertaken, the highest competence/qualification levels have been derived for each worker. The definitions for each level are largely the same as those used in the 2004 survey[2] (the technical report shows the definitions of each level).

[2] In 2004 CSCS/CSR green cards were categorised as Level 2 in 2007 they were categorised as Level 1.

Chart 5.2 Competence/qualification level by occupation



Base: All respondents where a competence/qualification level could be calculated (136)

Only occupations with at least 15 respondents where a competence/qualification level could be calculated are shown.

A quarter (26%) of the migrant workforce had no qualifications (i.e. they don't hold any qualification, management training or skill cards/certificates) compared with 8% of the overall workforce across UK and ROI.

Of the occupations shown labourers were the most likely to have a qualification although virtually none of them had qualifications above level 2.

5.7 Self assessment of skill Level

Workers' own perceptions as to whether they had all the skills they need to do their current job were ascertained after they were asked about the various qualifications they held or were working towards. Table 5.10 summarises the results.

Table 5.10 Self assessment of skill level and training needs for current job			
	Migrants %	No qualification, skill card/certificates nor working towards any %	Overall Workforce (UK/ROI) %
Have all the skills needed for current job	**64**	53	76
Need more training or qualifications	**10**	11	13
Need more experience	**22**	33	8
Don't know	**4**	3	3
Base: Migrant respondents (266); No qualification nor working towards any (96); Overall workforce (3,877)			

Migrant workers were less likely to say they had all the skills needed for their current job than the overall workforce. Despite the relatively low level of qualifications held by migrant workers they were more likely to say that they needed more experience than qualifications. Only around a tenth of those without any qualifications said they needed more training or qualifications while a third said they needed more experience.

All workers were also asked whether they felt they needed training in basic skills. Migrants were three times more likely to say they needed training in basic skills than the overall workforce, with around three-fifths expressing a need.

Unsurprisingly, the demand mainly focused on language skills with four-fifths wanting to improve their spoken English and two-fifths reading and writing respectively. The demand for maths training was comparable to the workforce as a whole.

Table 5.11 Need for training in basic skills			
	Migrants %	All identifying a need %	Overall Workforce (UK/ROI) %
Any need identified	**61**	100	**21**
Speaking English	**50**	82	**12**
Reading	**26**	42	**12**
Writing	**26**	42	**10**
Maths	**7**	11	**10**
Base: Migrant respondents (266); All identifying a training need (155); Overall workforce (3,877)			

The other means by which increased training may arise from a demand-led worker angle is for those wishing to change occupation within the sector and anticipating their need for re-training. Around one in six (17%) migrant workers said they would like to change the type of work they do within the construction industry (slightly higher than the overall workforce average of 14%) and the vast majority of these workers (76%) said that they would need further training and qualifications to effect a switch in roles.

The most common roles workers wanted to switch to tended to be those that are more skilled. Sixteen percent of those who wanted to switch said they would like to be a plant/machine operative, while 15% wanted a managerial position and 13% would like to be an electrician. Although a similar proportion of migrant workers who wanted to switch roles gave better pay as a motivation for switching as for those wanting to switch amongst the overall workforce, they were around twice as likely to have said that they wanted a more interesting job (79% of migrant workers vs. 42% of the overall workforce).