



# Civil Contractors Federation National Skills Survey



## Introduction

Civil Contractors Federation National (*'CCF National'*) is the peak employer voice for the civil construction industry representing 1,900 companies across Australia. CCF members are responsible for the construction and maintenance of Australia's civil infrastructure including road, bridges, pipelines, drainage, ports and utilities. With offices located in every capital city we advocate for the industry at Federal, State / Territory and local Government levels. CCF members include tier 1, 2, 3 and below civil construction companies ranging in size from 1-4 employees up to 200+ employees.

CCF National advocates for a number of key civil infrastructure policy reforms. These reform 'pillars' are critical to positioning the industry to meet future infrastructure demand and to support national economic growth. The five policy pillars are:

1. Infrastructure Investment and Funding
2. Efficient, Equitable & Competitive Procurement
3. Skill Development and Training
4. Industrial Relations
5. Protecting & Enhancing the Viability of Civil Industry Businesses.

## Survey

Approximately 70 companies took part in a survey developed by CCF National to obtain feedback and data on the skills needs of CCF members. The survey was held over a 10-day period in late October 2020.

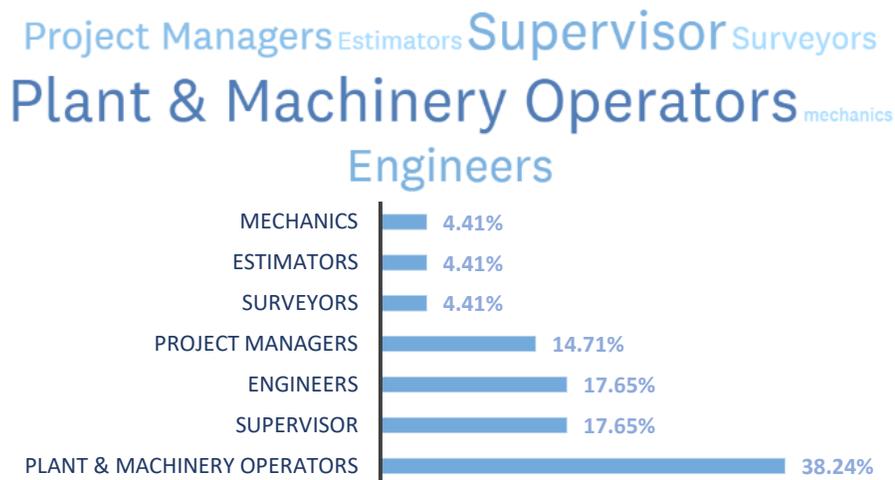
The survey focuses on nine key areas including key civil occupation shortages, the reasons for those shortages and expectations for the future.

CCF National is pleased to provide the results of this survey to help industry and government better understand the steps needed to ensure there are sufficient skilled workers in the civil construction sector to support a thriving and sustainable industry that will lead Australia's economic recovery.

## Civil occupation shortages

Industry members identified a wide spread of occupations they find it difficult to recruit for, with more than 30 occupations nominated by survey participants. Plant and machinery operators, supervisors, engineers and project managers were the most frequent responses from respondents.

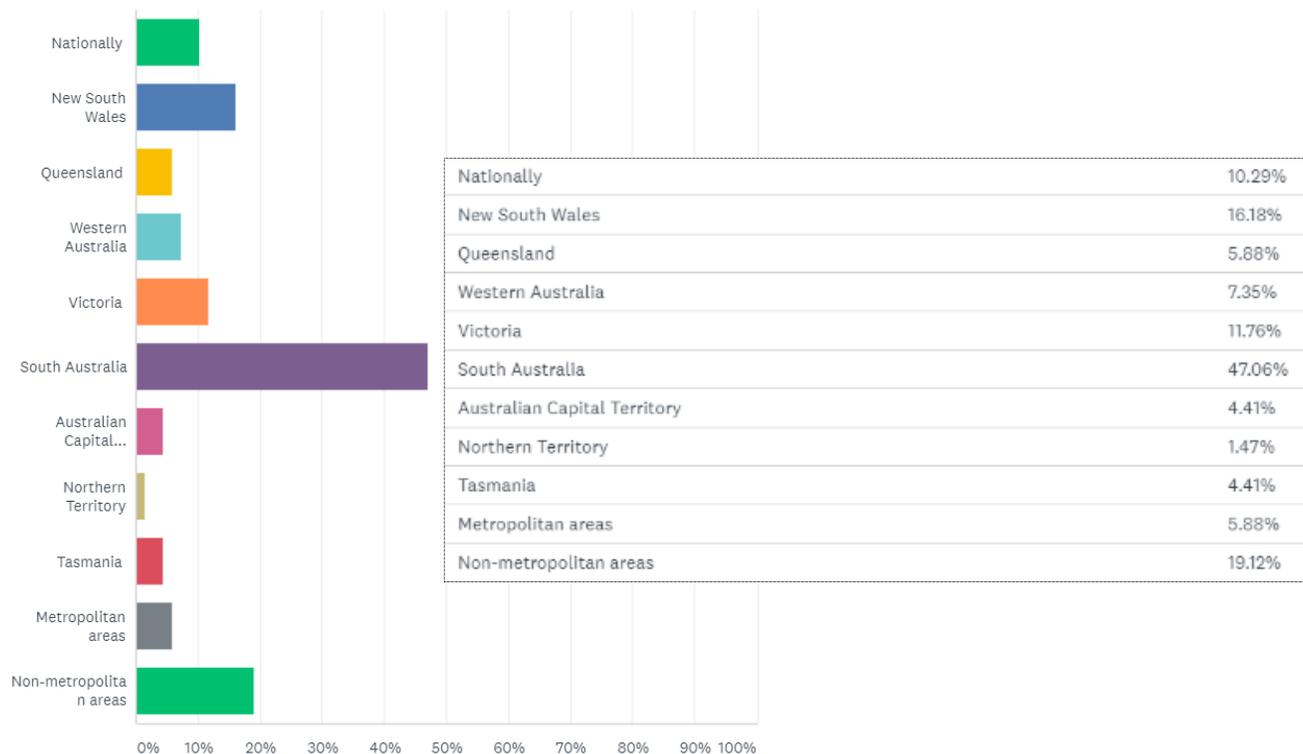
*Question 1: What civil occupations do you find it difficult to recruit for?*



## Shortages by location

Feedback was sought from CCF members in every state and territory in rural, regional and metropolitan areas. Responses were provided from CCF members in all parts of the country.

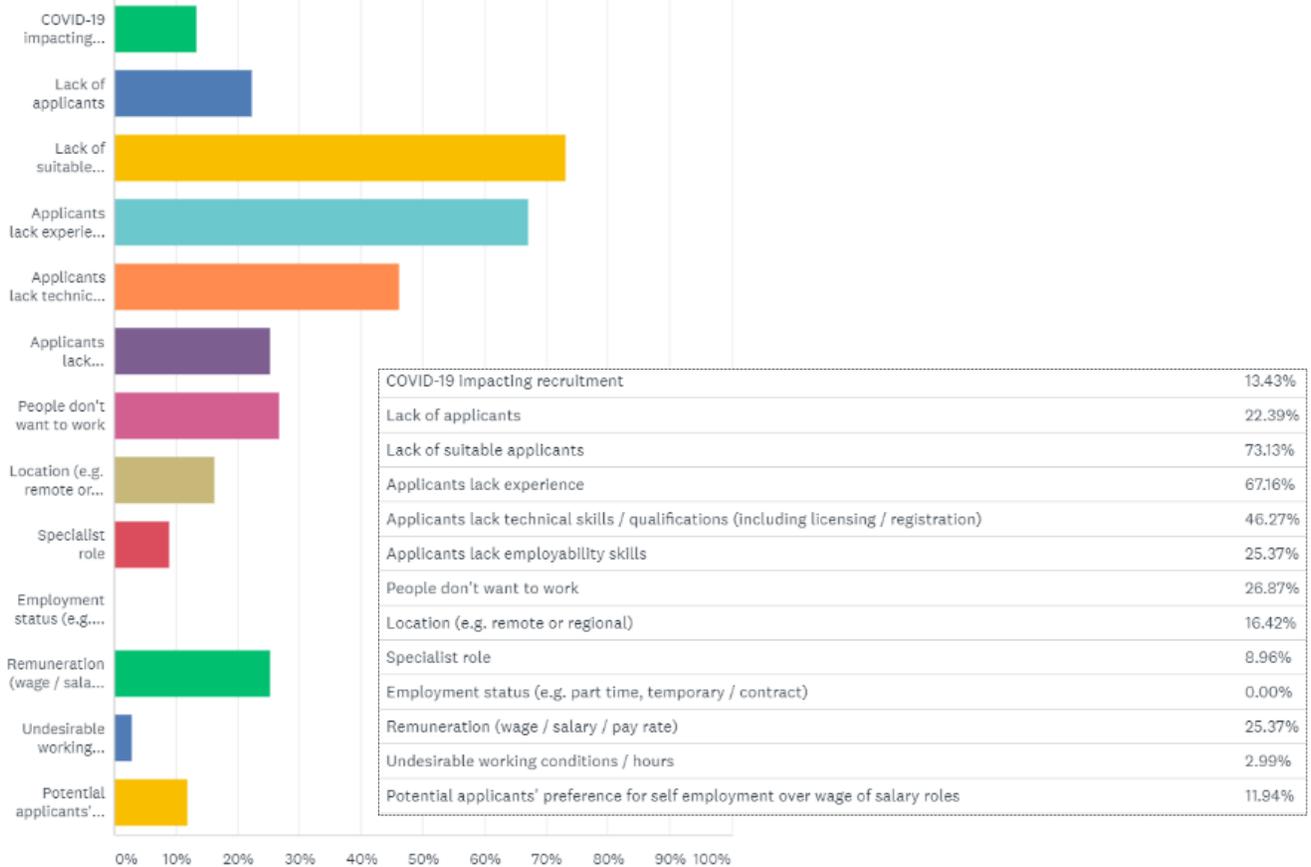
*Question 2: Where do you find it difficult to recruit for these occupations?*



## Reasons for shortages

The survey demonstrates a spread of reasons why companies face challenges recruiting for these civil occupations, predominantly a shortage of skilled and suitable applicants and a lack of experienced applicants.

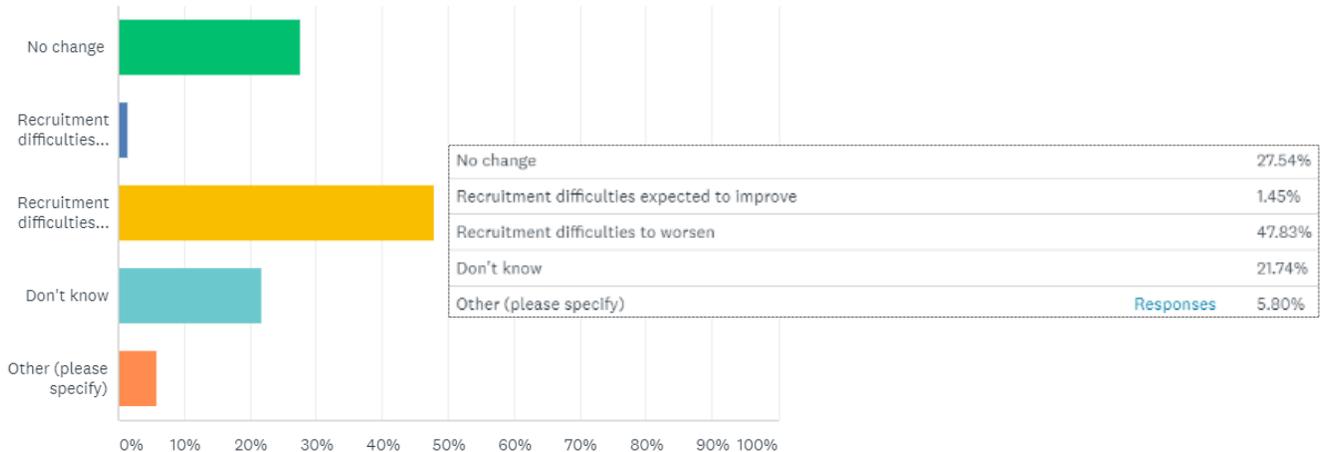
### Question 3: Why do you find it difficult to recruit for these occupations?



## Market expectations

Respondents were generally pessimistic that recruitment conditions would improve over the next 12 months, with nearly half of all respondents expecting conditions to worsen throughout 2021.

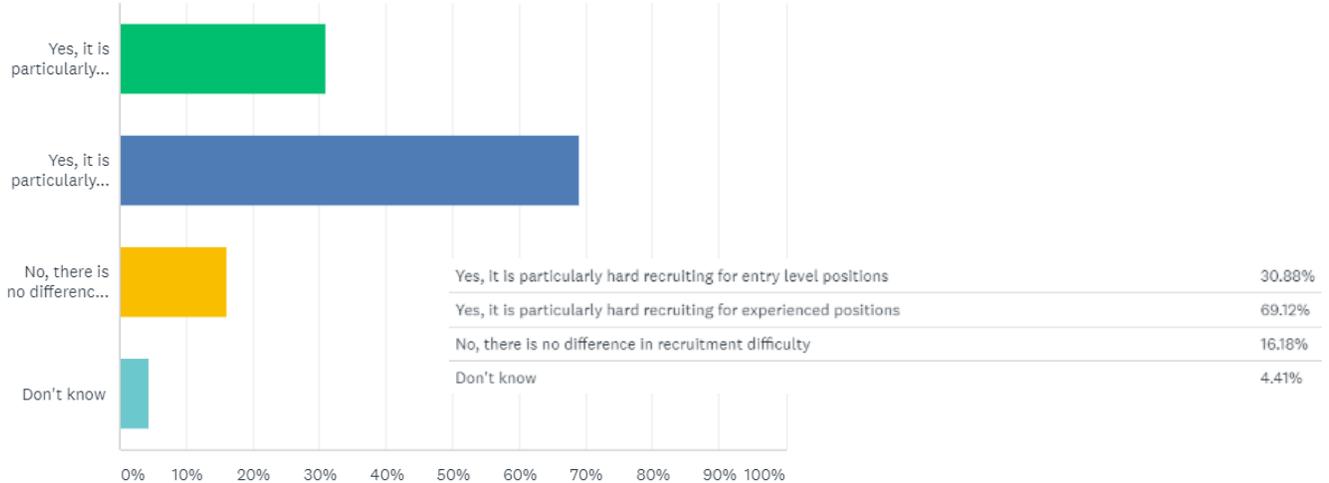
### Question 4: Do you expect the labour market for these occupations to change in the next 12 months?



## Skill level

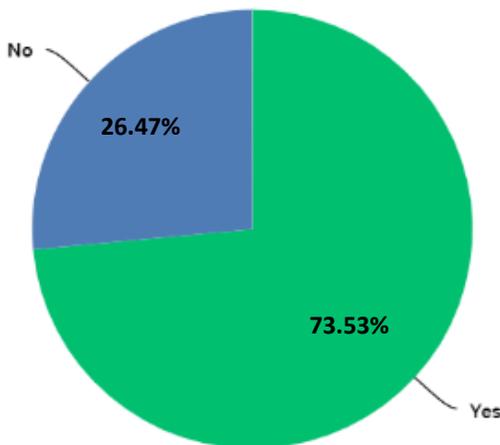
The survey reaffirmed a significant recruitment challenge faced by companies is attracting experienced applicants to civil occupations, with nearly 70% of respondents saying they find it hard to source experienced staff to fill vacant positions.

**Question 5: Do you find it difficult to recruit for entry level or experienced positions within these occupations?**



## VET funding

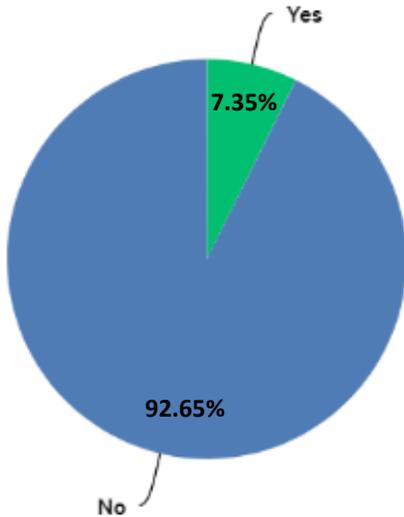
Nearly three quarters of survey respondents identified the need for civil occupations to be eligible for federal VET funding, reaffirming and validating CCF National's advocacy for key civil occupations to be included on the National Skills Needs List.



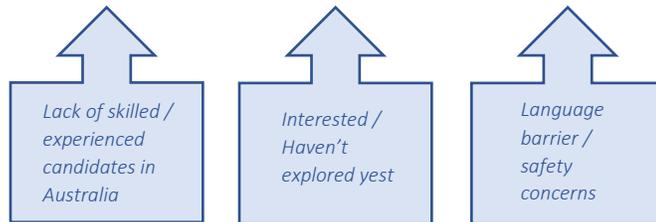
**Question 6:**  
*If civil occupations (and subsequently your organisation) qualified for VET funding, would this assist or contribute to your recruitment activities?*

## Overseas workers

The survey confirms the Australian civil infrastructure sector places a heavy emphasis on recruiting local workers, with less than 10% of survey respondents indicating that they use employer sponsored programs to recruit overseas workers.



**Question 7:**  
**Do you use employer sponsored programs to recruit overseas workers?**  
**If so, why do you recruit internationally rather than domestically?**



## Recruitment strategies

Civil construction firms are using a variety of strategies to attract experienced and entry level workers to their organisations, over and above traditional methods such as advertising. This includes increased wages and contributing to a training initiative.

**Question 8: Have you taken any steps, outside of advertising, to attract employees for vacancies in occupations you identified in Question 1? If so, which of the following have you used?**

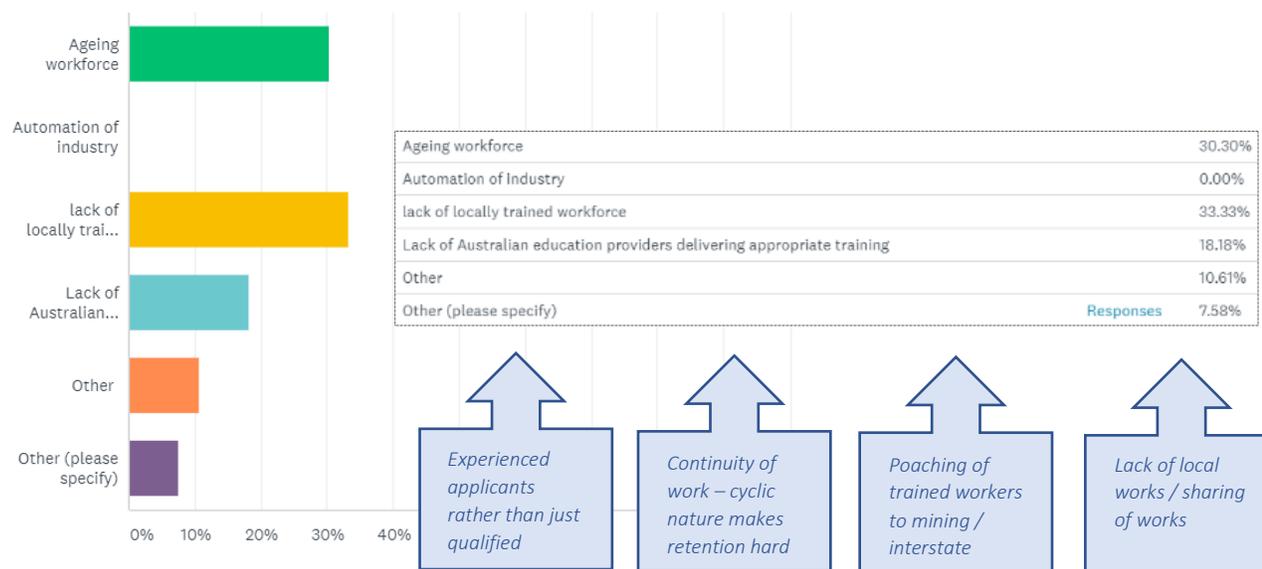


## Future challenges

An ageing workforce, a shortage of locally trained workers and a lack of appropriate training were all cited as challenges facing civil infrastructure firms impacting on their recruitment activities in the future.

**Question 9: Are you aware of any future challenges that may impact your ability to recruit the workers you need in this occupation?**

**For example, are the occupations vulnerable to automation or other external factors?**



## Conclusion and recommendations

Given the results of this survey, CCF National presents the following recommendation for consideration and adoption by the Federal Government to help build and sustain a highly skilled civil infrastructure workforce.

### Recommendation

The Federal Government must include key civil construction occupations on the National Skills Needs List as a matter of urgency. This is to ensure that employers, employees and registered training operators are eligible for relevant financial incentives, such as the Federal Government’s \$100 million Australian Apprenticeships Incentives Program which is due to commence on 1 January 2021.

Listing civil occupations on the National Skills Needs List will help bring new entrants into the industry via the delivery of employer sponsored apprenticeships during this challenging economic period. Providing industry with this incentive is paramount in the current conditions, particularly in light of industry’s capacity to undertake more projects and to take on more workers. And, in light of significant investment in new roads, railway lines, bridges and dams, action on this front is needed to ensure Australia has the workforce it needs to deliver on the Government’s infrastructure agenda.

All enquiries regarding this report can be directed to:

**Christopher Melham**

Chief Executive Officer

E: [ccfnat@civilcontractors.com](mailto:ccfnat@civilcontractors.com)

P: 02 6273 8312

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