Board Event June 2025 Construction focus

Pre-reading pack



Stakeholder engagement event 16 June 2025

Board session 17 June 2025

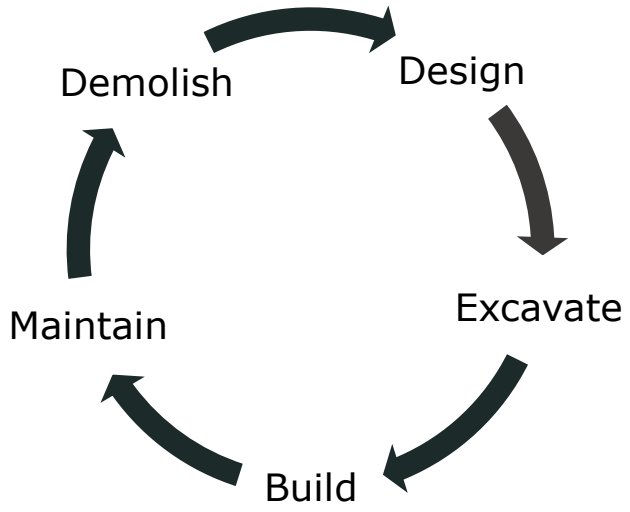
WORKSAFE
Mahi Haumaru Aotearoa

Construction sector

Sub-industries

- Civil Construction
- Residential Construction
- Commercial Construction
- Specialist Trades

Construction Lifecycle

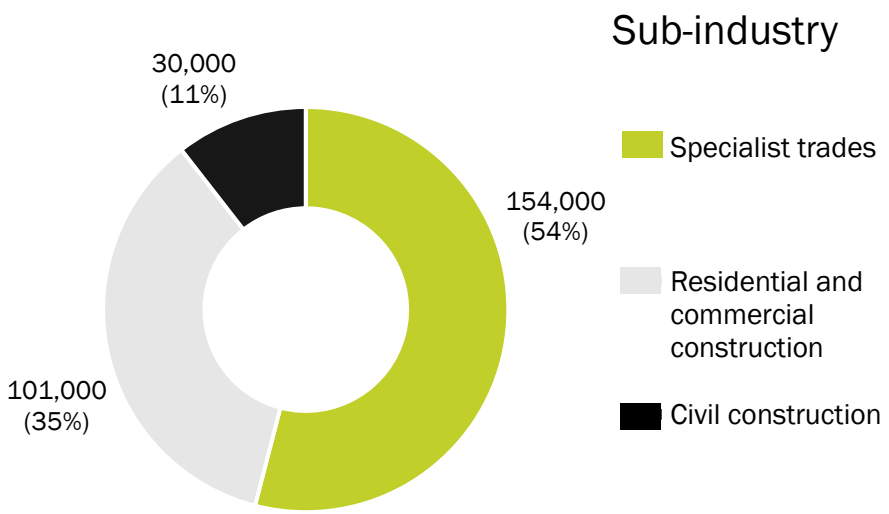


Frontline Activity

A third of WorkSafe's frontline activity will be targeted in Construction because of

- high rates of injuries
- a significant number of workers exposed to serious health risks
- presence of high-risk work that must meet permitting requirements

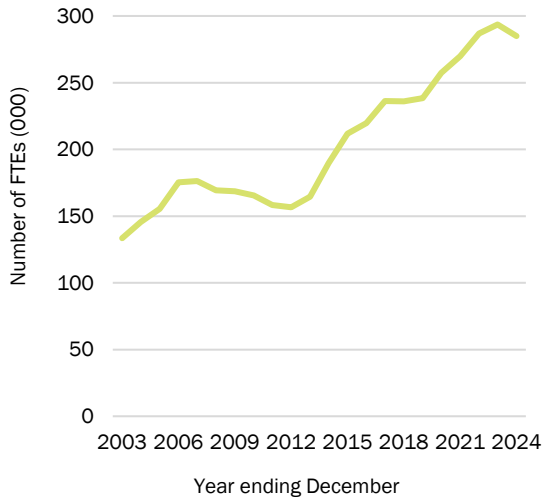
Workforce by sub-industry

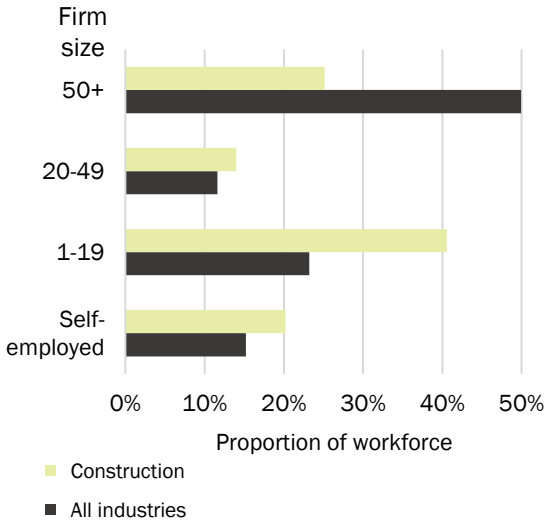


Construction is the largest industry by employment, making up 11% of the total New Zealand workforce.

- 285,000 fulltime-equivalent employees in 2024
- More than half of the construction workforce are employed in specialist trades such as:
  - Land development and site preparation (e.g., demolition, earthmoving)
  - Building structure (e.g., roofing, concreting, bricklaying)
  - Building installation (e.g., plumbing, electrical)
  - Building finishing (e.g., carpentry, glazing, tiling, painting)

Contribution to economy and profile by firm size

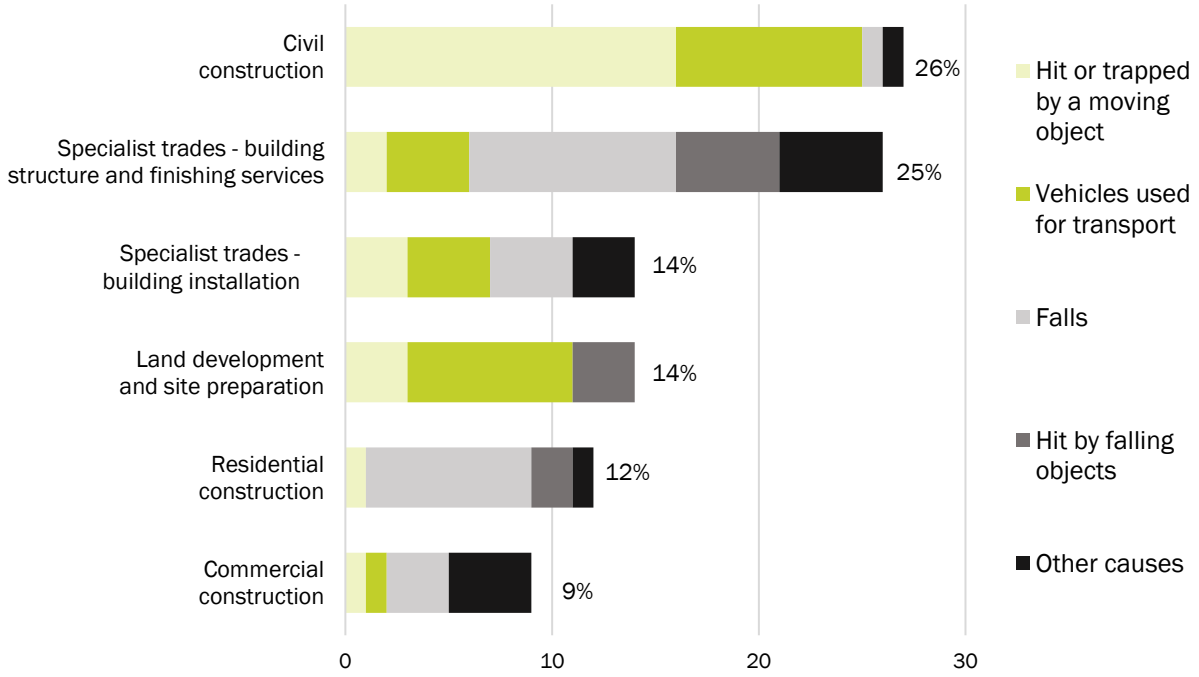




Construction contributes to an increasing share of the economy, from 4.6% in 2000 to 7.4% in 2023 (compared with 8.9% from manufacturing).

- Employment in construction has more than doubled since 2003
- It has higher proportions of sole traders and small firms compared to the average for all industries:
  - self-employed (20% vs 15%)
  - 1-19 employees (41% vs 23%)

Work-related fatalities



In the period 2011-2023, 102 lives were lost in the construction industry – an average of eight to ten deaths per year.

- Vehicles or mobile machinery were involved in half of the incidents, either on the road or at the worksite; about a quarter of fatalities were road accidents
- Vehicle incidents accounted for most of the fatalities in civil construction
- Falls caused one in four fatalities overall, but nearly half the fatalities in residential construction and related trades

Note: Data excludes fatalities involving members of the public

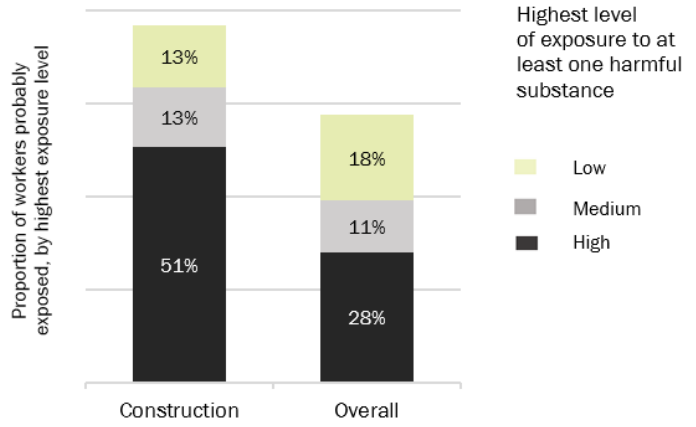
Falls from height: an analysis of investigation reports

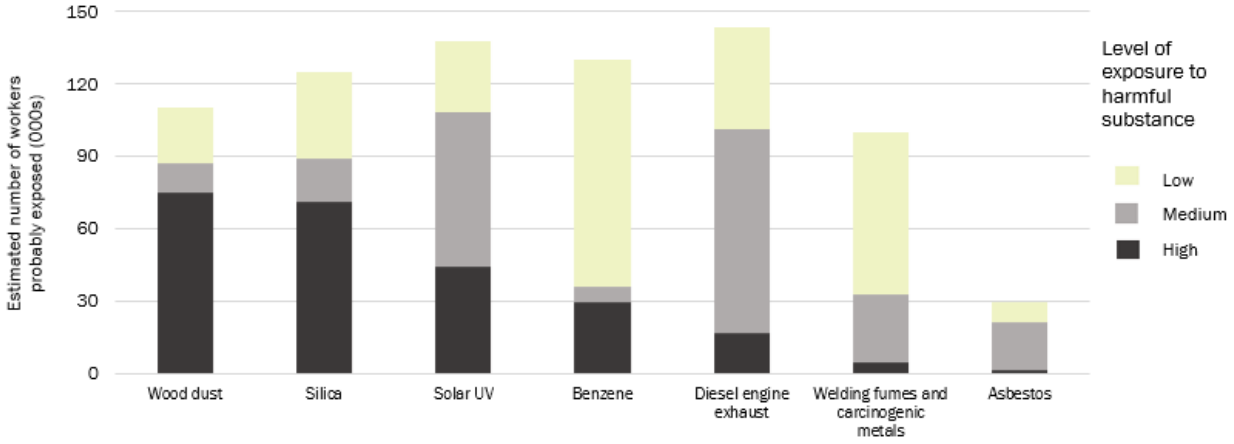
WorkSafe has begun an analysis of investigation reports in construction (2017-2021). The analysis aims to identify the common risk factors that contributed to the incidents prompting the investigation.

Preliminary analysis of 20 reports that resulted in falls from height found that the most common factors included:

- Unsafe victim actions
- Failure to monitor sub-contractors' health and safety
- Management failure to identify and control risk
- No fall protection
- Improper scaffolding

Exposure to carcinogens and airborne risks



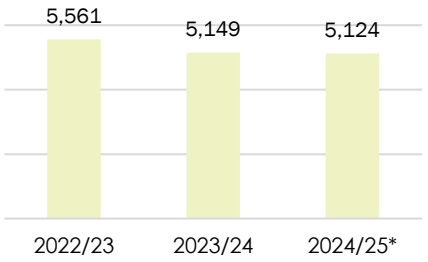


Construction workers are more likely than all workers to be exposed to carcinogens

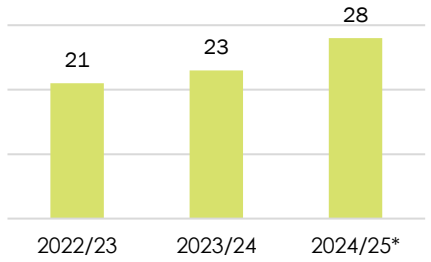
- On average, construction labourers are exposed to at least seven carcinogens; carpenters and electricians are exposed to at least six carcinogens
- The industry has the largest estimated numbers of workers with probable high exposure to carcinogens and airborne risks, including:
  - Silica dust (71,000 workers with high exposure)
  - Wood dust (75,000 workers with high exposure)
  - Welding fumes and carcinogenic metals (5,000 workers with high exposure and 100,000 with any exposure)
  - Asbestos (2,000 workers with high exposure and 30,000 with any exposure)

Assessment and investigation: delivery and outcome in construction

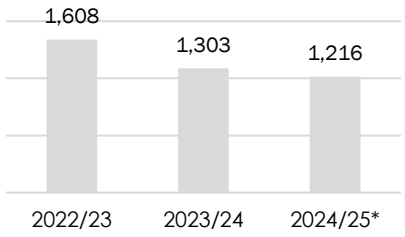
Assessments



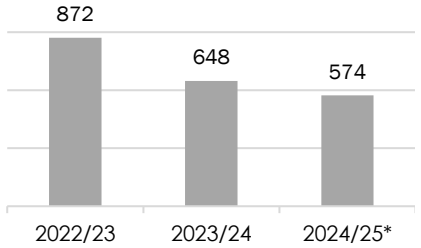
Investigations



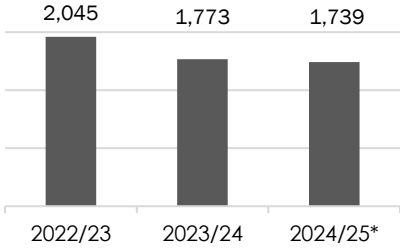
Improvement Notices



Prohibition Notices



Other Enforcements



* 1 July 2024 to 30 April 2025 (10 months)
Other Enforcements consist of: Verbal Direction, Directive Letter, Sustained Compliance Letter

Sector assessment activities have increased significantly in 2024/25.

- With quarter 4 yet to be completed, the delivery of construction sector assessments is tracking approximately 27% higher in 2024/25 compared with the previous year
- This includes nationally planned and coordinated assessment activity driven by the priority sector plans
- Engagement with construction sector operators, focusing on providing education and improving the availability of appropriate guidance, was also part of the delivery of assessment activity

Employer attitudes and practices in health and safety

Construction businesses consistently differ from survey^ averages on several key topics

Perspectives on health and safety culture

Construction businesses were **more likely** to:

- Say they have a strong health and safety culture
- Expect workers to take responsibility for working safely
- Say that rules and guidelines are sometimes impractical

Worker engagement

Construction businesses were **more likely** to:

- Have informal worker engagement processes
- Say that safe work gets positive recognition
- Say workers are encouraged to debate health and safety issues

Guidance, education and professional advice

In the past 12 months, construction businesses were **more likely** to have:

- Looked for guidance and information, especially on WorkSafe's website
- Done health and safety education or training
- Sought advice from a health and safety professional

Views about WorkSafe

Construction businesses were :

- **More likely** to say they know a lot about WorkSafe
- **Slightly more likely** to have a strong opinion (either negative or positive) about whether WorkSafe works effectively with their type of businesses and is trustworthy

^ WorkSafe employer surveys, 2021 and 2023