

A photograph of two construction workers in high-visibility orange and yellow safety gear. One worker in the foreground is wearing a yellow hard hat and an orange jacket, looking down at a stack of white panels. Another worker in the background is also in similar gear, working with a tool. The background is a plain, light-colored wall.

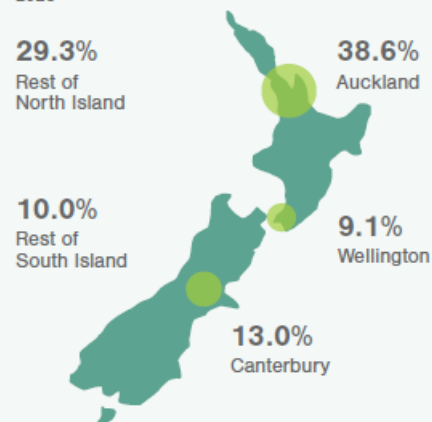
# ONSITE CONSTRUCTION

*Advice to the Tertiary Education Commission for  
training investment in 2027*

Published November 2025

## ONSITE CONSTRUCTION SECTOR

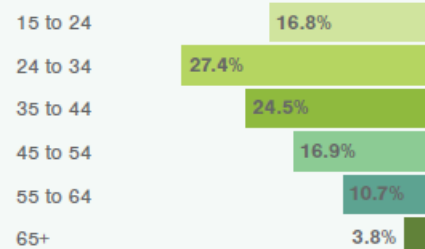
### EMPLOYMENT BY REGION<sup>1</sup> 2023



### GENDER<sup>2</sup> 2023

**86%** Men  
**14%** Women

### AGE<sup>3</sup> 2023



**50,780**

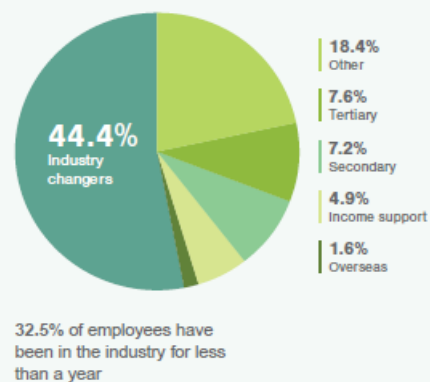
**TOTAL NUMBER OF BUSINESSES<sup>6</sup>**  
2023



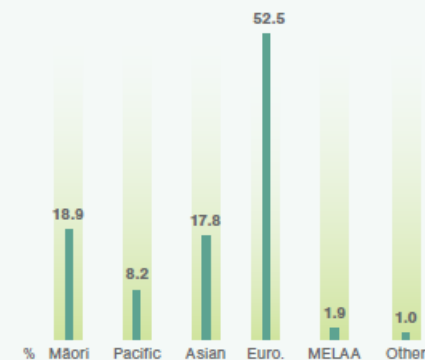
**17,544**

**TOTAL NUMBER OF SOLE TRADERS<sup>7</sup>**  
2023

### NEWCOMERS BY ORIGIN<sup>4</sup> 2023



### ETHNICITY<sup>5</sup> 2023



### MĀORI BUSINESS OWNERSHIP<sup>8</sup> 2023

**7%**



### PACIFIC BUSINESS OWNERSHIP<sup>9</sup> 2023

**2%**

This data is extracted from StatsNZ IDI and IRD and displayed in the Workforce Information Platform. Figures are defined by those who work for or own a business with a relevant ANZSIC (industry) code. The infographic can be found at [workforce.nz](https://workforce.nz)

---

# ONSITE CONSTRUCTION NARRATIVE

---

For most of 2025, the **Offsite and Onsite Construction Strategic Reference Groups** (SRGs) operated as a single combined group. While their advice documents remain separate, their perspectives have been captured in a unified narrative.

## Initial pre-trade focus with a view to future training investment

The sector has expressed a desire for particular focus on pre-trade programmes (Level 2 and 3) to ensure a pipeline of learners is established. While the emphasis of this advice is on pre-trade, there is an expected eventual uptick in Level 4 programmes as learners progress through the pipeline. This may coincide with a pickup in project activity and serves as an early signal of potential demand. Although we anticipate this demand emerging in 2028, there is a slight chance it could surface in 2027.

## Building Pathways project

Related to the above, we have been working on the Building Pathways project. The project was designed to improve the building qualification pathway for learners and employers. In March 2025, Waihanga Ara Rau produced the 'Building Pathways' report outlining insights and proposed solutions, including providing micro-credentials alongside existing qualifications and introducing new Carpentry skill standards. Work is ongoing and will progress up until the transition to Industry Skills Boards (ISBs).

The outcomes of this project may, over time, affect future provision, particularly for the qualifications covered by the project. It encompasses some of the most widely used vocational qualifications in New Zealand (listed in the investment advice section below).

The SRG has emphasised the importance of recognising and highlighting alternative pathways, particularly in carpentry, where becoming a business owner can be viewed as the natural progression after qualification. For example, there is significant value in roles such as leading hand, where business-related skills, often not covered in a standard apprenticeship, can be developed on the job. Acknowledging these pathways is essential to supporting a diverse and capable workforce. The products in development listed below are expected to provide additional pathways that recognise advanced and specialised skills. This will also be an area that Waihanga Ara Rau will be recommending be investigated further by the ISB.

## Aligning policy with workforce development needs

The Skilled Migrant Category Resident Visa is being updated. From mid-2026, two new pathways will support trades and technical roles:

- Skilled Work Experience Pathway: For those with 5+ years of relevant experience (2 in NZ at 1.1x median wage).
- Trades and Technician Pathway: For qualified tradespeople with 4+ years' experience (18 months in NZ at or above median wage).

These changes are particularly relevant to the construction sector, as they recognise practical experience and trade qualifications, making it easier for skilled workers to gain residence. This directly supports businesses across the sector in addressing labour and skills shortages.

However, the sector is also acutely aware that immigration policies must be considered within the broader context of workforce development. Long-term planning is essential to understand sector-level needs, particularly the pipeline of work and upcoming projects. This enables targeted training of the domestic workforce with the right skills for both current and future demands. At the same time, migrant workers should complement the existing workforce by filling critical gaps.

In addition, employers need support to train and upskill their workforce. Initiatives such as Fees Free and Apprenticeship Boost have played a vital role in increasing participation in training over recent years. These programmes are important levers. Together, such efforts help build a resilient, sustainable pipeline of workers who can adapt to changes in the economy and project activity.

To ensure these efforts are targeted and effective, decision-makers would benefit from tools that clearly illustrate their impact. Developing an 'impact matrix' to assess initiatives like these would be valuable for evaluating investment, policy, training, and project needs. Such a tool could forecast the consequences of action or inaction, much like a cost-benefit analysis. For instance, failing to invest in apprentice training by 2027 could lead to workforce gaps and stalled projects.

## Regulation and legislative changes

Several legislative and regulatory reviews are currently underway that will shape the construction sector and have significant implications for vocational education and workforce planning. These include updates to construction contract standards, reviews of occupational regulation for building practitioners and architects, amendments to payment and retention practices under the Construction Contracts Act, and ongoing changes to the Building Code and associated regulations.

It is essential that these discussions are closely aligned with conversations about training and workforce development. Decisions made through these will inevitably influence the skills and qualifications required across the sector. Establishing a formal relationship between MBIE and industry groups, whether through the ISB or another mechanism, is critical, especially following the disestablishment of programmes such as ConCove and the Construction Sector Accord.



---

# INVESTMENT ADVICE

---

## Overarching narrative

This document should be read alongside the overarching narrative document. The overarching narrative document provides the introduction and overarching assumptions for Waihanga Ara Rau's 2025 investment advice to the Tertiary Education Commission (TEC), focused on training provision for 2027.

The sector versions outline our approach to all qualifications relevant to each strategic sector, regardless of whether they meet TEC's investment threshold. This ensures that all stakeholders, from policymakers to industry leaders, can engage with advice that aligns with their areas of interest.

## 2027 Investment advice baseline year

We're applying a similar approach to the one used last year. **The baseline year is 2024**, which provides the most recent full year of training data. All active learners across the 2024 calendar year set the minimum level of provision we expect in 2027, with any recommended growth, reduction, or no change based on that starting point.

## Investment advice threshold (for 2027 delivery)

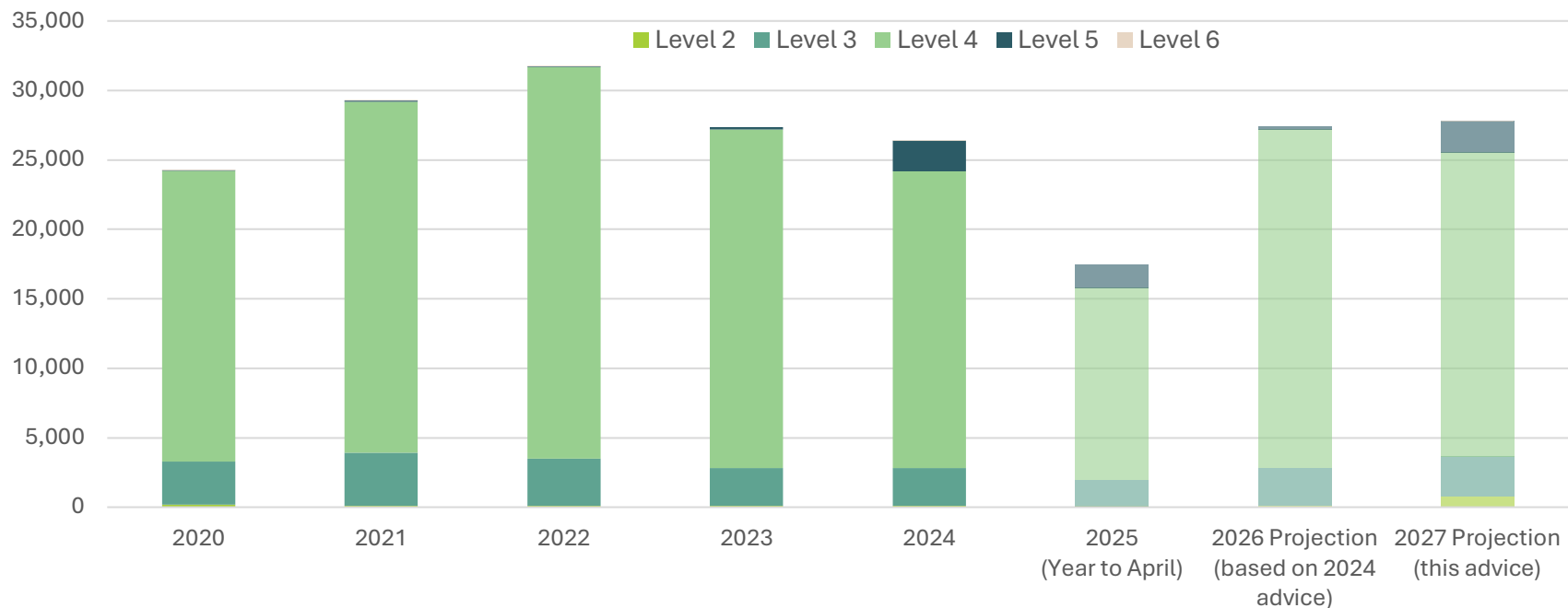
The threshold is intended to ensure our advice prioritises qualifications that could materially impact current TEC funding. Qualifications below the threshold generally fall within the margins of existing funding activity and therefore do not significantly affect funding availability. It is made explicit throughout that the overall growth percentage should be applied to all relevant qualifications, regardless of whether they meet the threshold. Publishing our approach for all qualifications under our coverage also enables providers to understand the provision landscape.

For qualifications within our scope, only those meeting the threshold are included in our formal submission to the Tertiary Education Commission (TEC). The 2027 threshold includes:

- Growth or reduction of more than 20 learners compared to the 2024 baseline.
- Not registered or not TEC-funded learners in 2024, but expected activity in 2027.
- Fewer than 20 learners in 2024, with projected growth that more than doubles by 2027.
- Qualifications where specific context and narrative are important to articulate are treated with particular attention.

## Learner trends and projections (2020-27)

Like many parts of the C&I sector, Onsite Construction saw a significant increase in learner numbers during 2021–22, largely driven by Government interventions such as Targeted Training and Apprenticeship Fund, First Year Fees Free, and Apprenticeship Boost. With the conclusion of most of these initiatives, aside from Fees Free shifting to final years, learner volumes have returned to more ‘normal’ levels.



### Notes:

- Learner data is sourced from TEC’s Ngā Kete as of April 2025. It includes all active TEC-funded learners within a calendar year and excludes non-TEC funded training.
- **2025** data reflects learner numbers as of April. Based on sector conversations, end-of-year figures are expected to be similar to 2024 levels or slightly lower.
- **2026** figures are based on advice provided in 2024, which projected no growth on 2023 learner numbers.
- **2027** figures represent projected provision based on this year’s advice.

## Context: Investment advice table

Onsite Construction has taken a cautious approach to investment advice for the reasons outlined in this report. This means a **no-growth approach – the 2027 provision should match the 2024 learner activity**.

The sector has expressed a desire for particular focus on pre-trade programmes (Level 2 and 3) to ensure a pipeline of learners is established. While the emphasis of this advice is on pre-trade, **there is an expected eventual uptick in Level 4 programmes** as learners progress through the pipeline. This may coincide with a pickup in project activity and serves as an early signal of potential demand. Although we anticipate this demand emerging in 2028, there is a slight chance it could surface in 2027.

In relation to the table below:

- **4237:** Replaced **2382**. The 10 active learners in 2382 have been included in the 2027 provision for 4237.
- **4574:** We are holding on to our advice from last year.
- **4842:** Developed in 2024. We are holding on to our advice from last year.
- **4971:** There is an intention from providers to develop programmes for delivery. We are still assessing numbers, but the baseline is to hold on to our advice from last year.
- **5058:** Developed in 2024. We are holding on to our advice from last year.
- **5347:** Developed in 2025, replacing **2945**, and a related Complex Apprenticeship. We are matching the 2027 provision for 5347 to the 2024 learner activity for 2945.
- **5387, 5388, 5453, 5457:** These qualifications and credentials were approved in 2025, and figures provided are based on industry consultation and projected demand identified through our comprehensive qualification development process. For 5387 and 5388, the consultation identified a demand of 1,000 learners across the two credentials.
- **Building Pathways: 2738, 2834, 4188-9, 4571-5, 5387-8:** These are part of the Building Pathways Project. Programmes are either already being delivered or providers intend to develop them for delivery. We are still assessing learner numbers, but the baseline is to hold on to our advice from last year, where there was no activity in 2024. Otherwise, it follows the general approach of matching the 2027 provision to the 2024 learner activity.



## Investment advice table

Code	NZQA Qualification Title	2027 Total Provision	Growth on 2024 base	Meets threshold
1814	New Zealand Certificate in Foundation Construction (Level 3) with strands in Concrete Foundation Walls and Concrete Slab On-ground, and Pile Foundations (with optional strand in Concrete Placing and Finishing)	150	0	No
2381	New Zealand Certificate in Construction Related Trades (Supervisor) (Level 4)	205	0	No
2382	New Zealand Certificate in Construction Related Trades (Main Contract Supervision) (Level 5) – <i>replaced by 4237</i>	N/A	N/A	Yes
2737	New Zealand Certificate in Stonemasonry (Level 4) with strands in Monumental Masonry, Construction Stonemasonry, and Natural Stone Fixtures and Fittings (with optional strands in Banker Masonry, and Conservation and Preservation)	120	0	No
2738	New Zealand Certificate in Carpentry (Level 4) with optional strand in Metal Roof Cladding Installation	18,930	0	Yes
2834	New Zealand Certificate in Construction Trade Skills (Level 3)	2,025	0	Yes
2945	Complex Apprenticeships: New Zealand Certificate in Glazing (Level 4) with strands in Residential Glazing, Commercial Glazing, and Frameless Glazing – <i>replaced by 5347</i>	N/A	N/A	No

3137	New Zealand Certificate in Trowel Trades (Level 4) with strands in Brick and Block Laying	310	0	No
3512	New Zealand Certificate in Roofing (Installation) (Level 4) with strands in Concrete or Clay Tile Roof, Profiled Metal Roof and Wall Cladding, Metal Tile Roof, Roof Membrane Systems, and Shingle or Slate Roof	1,305	0	No
4186	New Zealand Certificate in Concrete (Specialist) (Level 4) with strands in Concrete Sawing and Drilling, Prestressed Concrete, Precast Concrete, Concrete Pump Operation (Line Delivery System), and Concrete Pump Operation (Boom Delivery System)	45	0	No
4187	New Zealand Certificate in Concrete Production (Level 4) with strands in Batching, Dispatching, and Concrete Testing (with optional strand in Tensile Testing)	15	0	No
4188	New Zealand Certificate in Concrete Construction (Commercial and Civil Infrastructure) (Level 4) with optional strands in Premanufactured Elements, and Post-tensioned Concrete	150	0	No
4189	New Zealand Certificate in Concrete Construction Skills (Level 3) with strands in Formwork, Reinforcing, Placing and Finishing, Specified Concrete Finishes, Concrete Product Manufacture, Concrete Sawing and Drilling, and Precast Concrete Manufacture	235	0	No
4237	New Zealand Certificate in Construction Trades Supervision (Level 5) with strands in Commercial Construction, Construction Related Manufacturing, Construction Related Trades, and Residential Building – <i>replaced 2382</i>	2,195	0	Yes

4449	Install Insulation (Micro-credential)	15	0	No
4571	Basic Construction Skills (Micro-credential)	255	0	Yes
4572	Demolition and Renovation Skills (Micro-credential)	5	0	No
4573	Introductory Exterior Envelope Skills (Micro-credential)	45	0	No
4574	Introductory Interior Linings and Joinery Skills (Micro-credential) - V1	20	20	Yes
4575	On-site Assembly Skills (Micro-credential)	30	0	No
4842	Steel Fixing/Reinforcement Installation for Construction and Infrastructure (Entry-Level) (Micro-credential)	50	50	Yes
4971	Trades Essentials (Micro-credential) (Level 2)	200	200	Yes
5058	New Zealand Certificate in Demolition (Level 3)	40	40	Yes
5347	New Zealand Certificate in Glazing – replaced 2945 with numbers captured here.	230	0	Yes
5387	Contribute to sustainable practices in a construction environment (Micro-credential)	500	500	Yes

5388	Reduce material waste in a construction environment (Micro-credential)	500	500	Yes
5453	New Zealand Certificate in Complex Glazing (Level 5)	25	25	Yes
5457	New Zealand Certificate in Swimming Pool Building (Level 4)	60	60	Yes
-	Programme: Building and Construction Skills Training Scheme (Level 2)	70	0	No
-	Programme: Construction - Residential and Commercial	25	0	No
-	Programme: Advanced Construction Site Management Training Programme	20	0	No
-	Programme: Work Readiness Building and Construction (Level 2)	20	0	No
	Total	27,805	1,395	

## Products in development

Reference	Title	Type	Status	Likely Year
TBC	Building Pathways - Longrun roof installation	Micro-credential	Developing Business Case	

TBC	Building Pathways - Steel frame construction	Micro-credential	Developing Business Case	TBC
TBC	Building Pathways - Commercial construction methods	Micro-credential	Developing Business Case	TBC
TBC	Building Pathways - Commercial compliance systems	Micro-credential	Developing Business Case	TBC
TBC	Building Pathways - Business skills for construction	Micro-credential	Developing Business Case	TBC
TBC	Demolition - High reach	Micro-credential	Developing Idea	TBC
TBC	Demolition - Concrete crushing	Micro-credential	Developing Idea	TBC
TBC	Demolition - Sawing and drilling	Micro-credential	Developing Idea	TBC
TBC	Demolition - Operator (Level 4)	Qualification	Developing Idea	TBC
TBC	Garage Door Installation credential	TBC	Developing Idea	2027

**Building Pathways - Business skills for construction:** This is noted here and in the C&I Services advice. It will likely encompass broader skills beyond tool-specific competencies, which are relevant to wider sector discussions. Advice will be provided regardless of where this sits.