



# Addressing Skills Shortages In Australia

April 2026



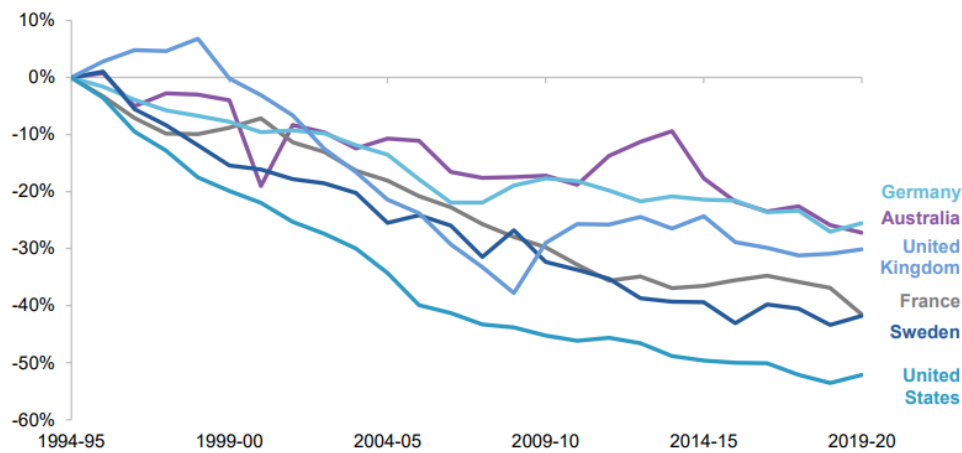
## Introduction

Australia's Productivity Commission in its [Housing construction productivity: Can we fix it? Research paper](#) found that increasing productivity of the construction process would lower construction costs and assist with housing supply and affordability.

Amongst its recommendations it noted complex and slow approvals, lack of innovation, lack of scale and workforce issues were contributing to falling productivity.

It also found that construction productivity across the world is falling.

**Figure 2 – In advanced economies, construction sector productivity was slow<sup>a</sup>**  
**Cumulative difference in construction and market sector productivity growth**



a. Significant data limitations mean construction productivity may be underestimated in some other advanced economies. Appendix D has more detail.

Reproduced from Productivity Commission: [Housing construction productivity: Can we fix it? Research Paper 2025](#)

Australia and many other countries are faced with substantial housing shortages and pressing infrastructure needs.

This is placing significant pressure on the construction sector creating chronic skills shortages leaving governments, industry and professionals searching for solutions on how to deliver what is needed to make the best use of the human, capital and material resources that are currently available.

Some of the potential solutions include taking a different, more sophisticated approach to attracting more people into construction (particularly construction professions) and finding ways to get more out of the people who are already in the sector and ensuring that they deliver as much as they can as effectively and efficiently as they can.

RICS as the leading global professional body for chartered surveyors (who work in a range of fields across the sector including in land, construction, property and real estate) undertakes global research and publishes regular papers on construction including the quarterly [Global Construction Monitor](#) and the [Global Commercial Property Monitor](#) as well as conducting a series of reports on [Construction Productivity](#) and [Digitalisation In Construction](#).

This research shows that:

- Skills shortages, financial constraints and material costs are consistently reported as the biggest constraining factors on construction
- The most recent Construction Productivity Report identified the availability of skilled workers as the most important intervention that will increase productivity in construction globally and here in Australia

In Australia there are chronic shortages across four of RICS professional pathways including construction project managers, quantity surveyors, building certifiers and planners.

These are well paid, highly transferrable roles. Construction profession roles are in demand around the world and more can and should be done to promote surveying as an exciting and interesting career and to build awareness of these types of roles as fulfilling and engaging career paths.

Greater focus should also be placed on upskilling the existing construction workforce including through encouraging professionals working in the sector to become chartered surveyors and undertaking further training.

## Skills Shortages In Australia

In 2025 Infrastructure Australia's [Market Capacity Report](#) confirmed sustained demand for Project Management Professionals which is now expected to peak at around 59,000 in mid-2027 under current expected infrastructure workloads<sup>1</sup> with the current number of project management professionals standing at 24,480 or 12% of the total infrastructure workforce<sup>2</sup>.

Infrastructure Australia in its [2024 Market Capacity Report](#) forecast that chronic shortages would remain across the workforce with 29,000 project management professionals in shortage (15% of total shortages) with shortages expected to steadily increase until mid-2027 to 37,000<sup>3</sup>.

Infrastructure Australia also reported that:

- Construction industry productivity growth remains stagnant although economic and financial indicators for the industry are up
- Upskilling is regarded as having the greatest impact on productivity with automation, digital tech and materials innovation lower on the list<sup>4</sup>
- Construction project management is the second highest factor affecting their productivity

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<sup>1</sup> Page 44

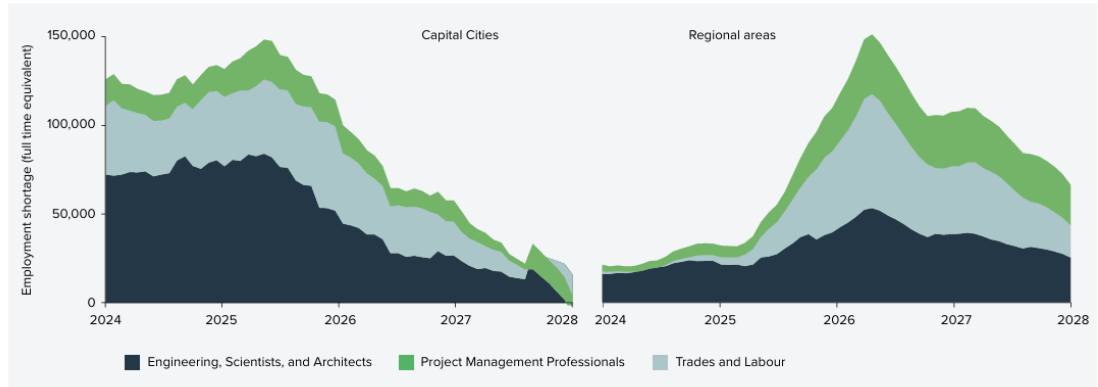
<sup>2</sup> Page 43

<sup>3</sup> Page 53

<sup>4</sup> Page 74

Essentially demand for construction project managers is increasing year on year and demand is varying significantly between regional and capital cities.

Figure 14: Workforce shortage by occupation group, capital-city areas versus regional areas (2024-25 to 2028-29)



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Reproduced from Infrastructure Australia’s Market Capacity Report 2025

In addition Jobs and Skills Australia regularly lists several of the key [RICS sector pathways](#) as being in critical shortage either nationwide, on a state by state basis and in a regional context.

Occupation	Australia	NSW	VIC	QLD	SA	WA	TAS	NT	ACT
Construction Project Manager	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S
Quantity surveyor	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S
Building Inspector	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S
Urban and Regional Planners	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	S	S

S = state wide shortages

R = regional shortages

## Why It's Important To Upskill The Current Workforce

### The Cost Of Rework

In 2022 Autodesk/FMI estimated that rework in the United States construction sector represents 5% of the total \$1.3 trillion construction spend, that is \$65 billion annually, in its [Trust Matters The High Cost of Low Trust](#) paper.

In addition in 2024 McKinsey reported that one of the key actions that can be taken to improve construction productivity is to upskill project staff in its [Improving construction productivity is the new imperative Report](#).

Bond University's Centre for Comparative Construction Research issued research on [The costs of rework: insights from construction and opportunities for learning](#) which indicated that construction firms mean yearly profit can be reduced by 28% due to rework and that rework can account for 34% of the total costs incurred.

# Productivity and Construction

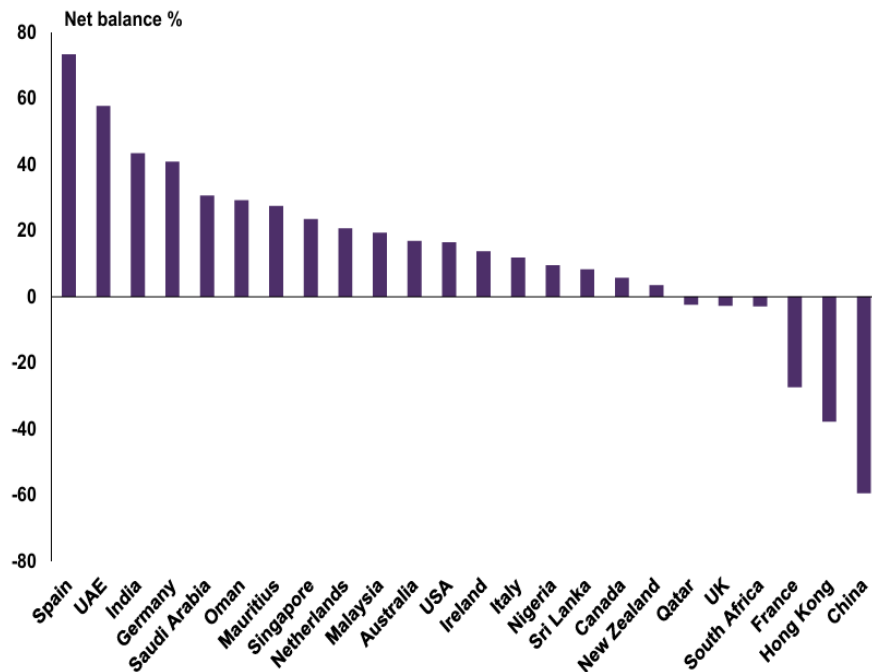
## RICS Global Monitors

RICS publishes the Global Construction Monitor and the Global Commercial Property Monitors (including the APAC Commercial Property Monitor) on a quarterly basis. The Monitors are leading sentiment indicators of the construction, infrastructure and commercial property markets in the UK, Europe, Asia Pacific, North America, Middle East and Africa.

We receive statistically significant responses from members in Australia and all around the world who work in the relevant sectors and the reports and data are provided to a range of central banks.

The Monitors provide important information in relation to construction activity in Australia and around the world and what are the key issues in the major jurisdictions and levels of activity including a 12 month expectations sentiment indicator.

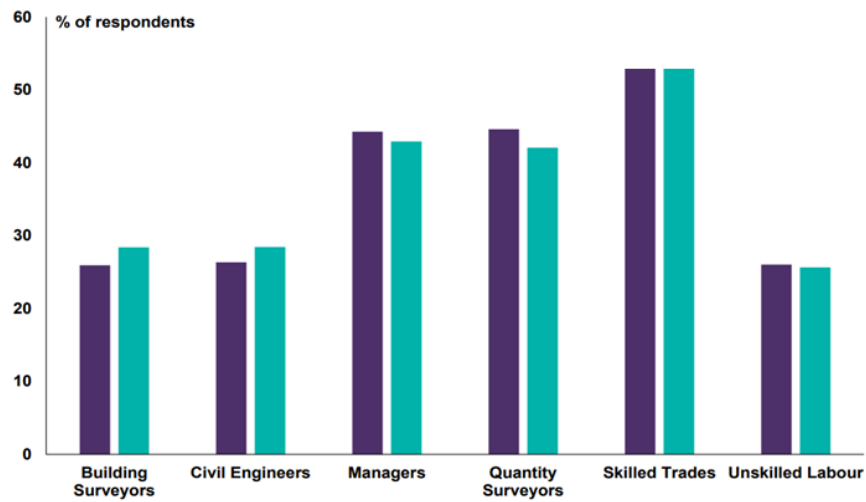
Chart 2 - Current Trend in Headline Workloads by Country



Reproduced from RICS Global Construction Monitor Q4 2025

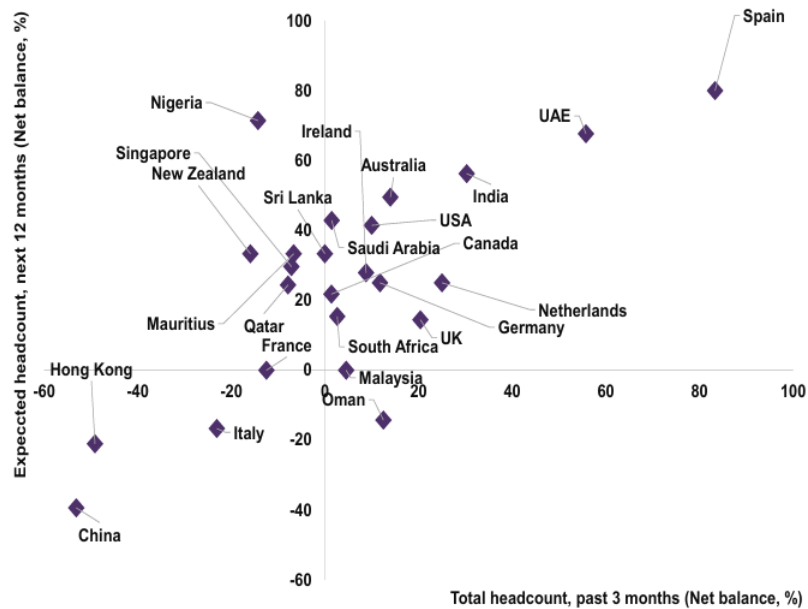
Data from the most recent Global Construction Monitor also indicated the skills shortage breakdown was reported at a global level as follows.

Chart 5 - Skills shortages breakdown



With current and expected trends in industry headcount by country as follows.

Chart 4 - Current and Expected Industry Employment Trends



Reproduced from RICS Global Construction Monitor Q4 2025

## RICS Construction Productivity Reports and Findings

RICS has issued two global Construction Productivity Reports. The first in [2023](#) and the second in [2024](#).

The 2024 Construction Productivity Report found the following:

- Globally the most commonly used definition of labour productivity is 'earned value over the actual cost' accounting for 26.8% of all respondents although across APAC 'value of work completed per worker hours' is also used often. In Australia 29.12% of respondents reported using 'earned value over the actual cost'.
- Monthly measurement of productivity is the most common measurement frequency globally with Australia recording the highest number of responses (36.8%) confirming they measure productivity monthly.
- When asked about labour productivity there was improved optimism about performance globally for the next 12 months with significant improvements and modest improvements both having higher scores. In Australia 3.77% reported expectations of significantly improved labour productivity, 27.36% reported modest improvement, 46.23% said labour productivity was unchanged. The remaining responses divided equally between expectations of labour productivity falling or respondents not sure what will happen in the next 12 months.

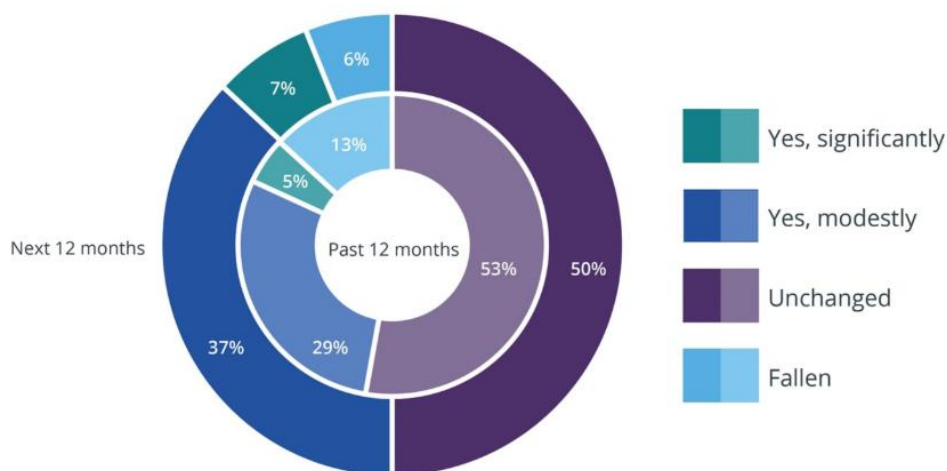


Figure 4: Global responses to productivity outlook

The 2024 RICS Construction Productivity Report asked respondents to provide their views on what interventions were most likely to increase productivity and reported at a global level which interventions were thought to result in the greatest improvement on productivity.

<b>Impact</b>	<b>Intervention</b>
High	Availability of skilled workers Scheduling, sequencing and co-ordination
Moderate	Supply chain Site safety and well-being Changes and variations Site supervision and coordination Procurement route and contracting model Construction documentation
Low	Materials including prefabricated modules Construction equipment and tools

The Australian data indicated the following:

<b>Impact</b>	<b>Intervention</b>
High	Availability of skilled workers Changes and variations Supply chain
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RICS Australia has also conducted research of its Australian members.

We received the following responses to the questions listed below.

<p>What pathways are you seeing skills shortages in currently?</p>	<p>Construction project managers 62%                      Quantity surveyors 60%                      Building control 24%                      Others 14%</p>
<p>What Initiatives Are You Seeing In the Market That Are Helping To Address The Shortages?</p>	<p>Encouraging more diversity in the construction sector 63%                      Improved migration processing times 51%                      Changes to fee free TAFE 28%                      The UK-Australian Free Trade Agreement 12%                      Other 7%</p>
<p>Where Do You See The Most Significant Barriers To Filling The Skills Shortage?</p>	<p>Demand for construction is so high its outstripping the ability of the industry to attract new people 59%                      Lack of understanding of the interesting and well paid nature of construction industry roles 48%                      A perception that construction jobs only involve being on the tools 36%                      Perceived culture issues in the construction industry 33%                      Other 10%</p>
<p>What Do You Think RICS Could Do To Help Address The Skills Shortage?</p>	<p>Engage more at secondary school level 66%                      Engage more at a tertiary institution level 63%                      Work to raise broad public awareness of surveying as a great profession 62%                      Provide Australian based scholarships 62%                      Other 3%</p>

## Addressing The Skills Shortage and Improving Construction Outcomes By Making The Sector More Attractive And Upskilling Those Already In The Sector

Australian and global construction is faced with a myriad of issues in relation to skills shortages and productivity in construction.

From the perspective of skills and skills shortages there aren't enough people to meet the construction sector's needs in Australia and those people who are within the sector don't always possess the skills they need to deliver construction projects in the most efficient and effective way possible.

Construction sector roles, particularly those filled by chartered surveyors, are varied, well paid and in demand throughout the world.

In many instances they offer the ability for young and aspiring individuals as well as highly experienced professionals to work anywhere around the world, be very well remunerated and in the case of building certifiers carry out a public official/public interest role.

Key initiatives that could help encourage more people into construction profession roles include:

- Taking steps to ensure that career advice for secondary school students and individuals moves away from characterising all construction jobs as "being on the tools" and instead paints a more sophisticated picture about the range of professions available in the construction sector (many of which are very well remunerated and do not require physical strength), the benefits and opportunities of these careers (including their ability to allow individuals to work around the world) and the ability of a diverse range of individuals to take part in these careers on an equal and equitable basis.
- Placing continued focus on creating and promoting apprenticeships and vocational training for surveying roles as well as degree qualifications.
- Creating degrees that are specific to the professions that are in short supply (particularly quantity surveying and building certification) to help promote specific professions and to help address job readiness issues which are currently being experienced (where they do not currently exist).
- Highlight surveying as a profession to people who are looking to upskill or change careers due to redundancy or are returning to the workforce after having a career break to raise children or as a result of injury.

- That consideration be given to whether there are clear pathways and support for people who have worked in the trades (specifically as carpenters and electricians), builders (who are unable to support the physical aspects of their work) or allied professions (including other surveying pathways) to transition to surveying roles that are in demand where their expertise and knowledge will be a distinct advantage.
- Streamlining the current immigration system so that it is easier for highly qualified construction professions to apply for and start work in Australia.
- The introduction of a national licensing regime (where licences or registration is required) or further developing the automatic mutual recognition arrangements that are already in place in Australia so that highly qualified professionals (like chartered surveyors) can easily move around Australia and that it is easier for chartered surveyors to move to Australia.
- Further work be done to set in place high quality trade agreements that make it easier for suitably qualified professionals to obtain visas to work in Australia to facilitate global mobility of construction workers.
- Examining whether it makes sense to offer additional financial incentives to students who undertake degrees or vocational training in areas where there are shortages.
- Offering financial incentives to attract suitably qualified professionals from overseas to help them overcome the cost of moving to Australia (as has currently been done in [Western Australia](#)).
- Explore options to work with RICS member firms to help them offer more enticing scholarships and apprenticeships.

## The Importance of Upskilling In Terms Of Increasing Efficiency And Productivity In the Construction Sector

RICS offers a qualification to people with demonstrated experience and leadership abilities. We accredit degrees through a rigorous [globally consistent accreditation process](#).

Globally we accredit 161 separate degrees for our project management pathway of which 119 are in the United Kingdom and 14 are in Australia. For quantity surveying we accredit 374 courses, of which 243 courses are in the United Kingdom and 44 are in Australia.

These include undergraduate and postgraduate degrees offered in Project Management, Construction Management by the University of Technology Sydney, RMIT University and Bond University.

To become a Chartered Project Management Surveyor candidates must have passed an accredited degree *or* demonstrate five years relevant experience and any bachelor's degree *or* show ten years of relevant experience operating at an advanced level by seniority, specialisation or in academia.

## Upskilling The Construction Workforce

There are some key initiatives that could and should be taken to upskill the construction workforce:

- Encouraging greater construction project management and quantity surveying skills and qualifications to deliver productivity improvements, budget and cost savings with flow on effects in terms of the ability to deliver more housing and infrastructure.
- Greater use of construction project managers and quantity surveyors with formal qualifications.

## RICS Is Pleased To Play It's Part in Upskilling The Australian Workforce

Apart from the exceptional skills and capabilities that becoming a chartered surveyor (whatever the pathway) provides RICS Australia have also recently launched our own training on [Commercial Management Fundamentals](#) which has been designed to help construction professionals be better prepared to face key challenges such as procurement, risk and commercial outcomes on construction projects.

## Appendix 1 Becoming A Chartered Project Management Surveyor

Individuals who wish to become chartered surveyors must meet the requirements set under our Assessment of Professional Competence (APC)<sup>6</sup> which covers a mix of technical and professional practice, interpersonal, business and management skills.

Applicants must submit a 3,000 word case study on a project or projects that they have been personally involved in two previous two years. They are provided a counsellor in their elected discipline and are subject to continuing professional development requirements.

They must then undertake an assessment by three Chartered Surveyors who have been specially trained to assess candidates.

The APC sets the core competencies for Chartered Project Managers under the following headings.

Mandatory	Ethics, Rules of Conduct and professionalism (Level 3) Client care (Level 2) Communication and negotiation (Level 2) Health and Safety (Level 2) Accounting principles and procedures (Level 1) Business planning (Level 1) Conflict avoidance, management and dispute resolution procedures (Level 1) Data management (Level 1) Diversity, inclusion and teamworking (Level 1) Inclusive environments (Level 1) Sustainability (Level 1)
Core Competencies	Contract practice (Level 3) Development/project briefs (Level 3) Leading projects, people and teams (Level 3) Managing projects (Level 3) Programming and planning (Level 3) Construction technology and environmental services (Level 2) Procurement and tendering (Level 2) Project finance (Level 2)
Optional Competencies (one to level 2)	Accounting principles and procedures or Communication and negotiation (must be to Level 3) or Conflict avoidance, management and dispute resolution procedures or Sustainability BIM Management Commercial management Consultancy services Contract administration Development appraisals

<sup>6</sup> [Assessment of Professional Competence \(APC\)](#)

	Legal/regulatory compliance Maintenance management Performance management Purchase and sale Stakeholder management Supplier management Works progress and quality management
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Competency requirements for Chartered Quantity Surveyors and Chartered Building Control Surveyors can be found on the RICS website<sup>7</sup>.

Alternatively they can join via our direct entry arrangements with other professional bodies where an equally rigorous process is undertaken to ensure that members joining us from the other professional body meet the same standards that RICS sets.

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<sup>7</sup> [Sector pathways](#)

## Delivering confidence

We are RICS. As a member-led chartered professional body working in the public interest, we uphold the highest technical and ethical standards.

We inspire professionalism, advance knowledge and support our members across global markets to make an effective contribution for the benefit of society. We independently regulate our members in the management of land, real estate, construction and infrastructure. Our work with others supports their professional practice and pioneers a natural and built environment that is sustainable, resilient and inclusive for all.

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