

NOVA SCOTIA

HIGHLIGHTS 2023–2032

Nova Scotia enters the 2023–2032 forecast period coming off a brief but intense time of growth. Investment levels in both the residential and non-residential sectors reached peak levels in 2022 and are expected to contract only slightly in 2023.

The province's housing market has been driven by strong levels of in-migration and historically low interest rates. As rates rise into 2023, the market for new-housing construction is expected to cool. Investment in the renovation sector, however, should increase annually across the forecast period.

The longer-term forecast sees investment growth sustained in both the non-residential and residential sectors between 2024 and 2028. The non-residential sector, in particular, will be influenced by investment on several key projects such as mining, wastewater, schools, and hospitals. Thereafter, growth slows with the conclusion of major projects and a slowdown in housing activity.

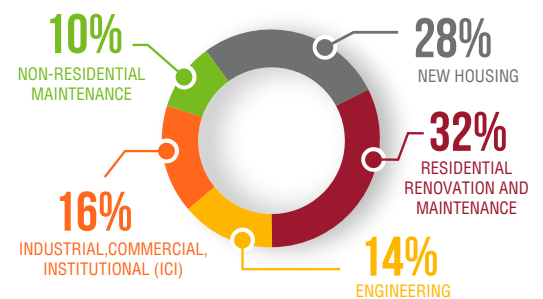
Rising demands across the forecast period will require the provincial construction labour force to increase by 2,900 workers. By 2032, the industry will likely need to recruit and retain as many as 10,700 additional workers to keep pace with expansion and replacement demands, as an estimated 7,800 workers, or 24% of the 2022 construction labour force, are expected to retire.

10-YEAR WORKFORCE OUTLOOK FOR NOVA SCOTIA



AVERAGE UNEMPLOYMENT RATE 10.6%

DISTRIBUTION OF CONSTRUCTION EMPLOYMENT IN 2022, NOVA SCOTIA



HIGHLIGHTS

- Rising employment requirements drove the province's average construction unemployment rate to 5.9% in 2022.
- Construction employment demands in the province are expected to rise to a peak of more than 33,200 workers in 2028, driven by increases in both residential and non-residential demand requirements.
- Housing starts reach a peak of nearly 6,200 units (+11% above 2022 levels) in 2027, driven by population growth.
- Ongoing work on a series of major non-residential projects brings employment to historic highs of more than 13,000 workers per year between 2026 and 2028.
- The market for most residential and non-residential trades and occupations remains strained through the near term, before moderating in later years.

BuildForce's LMI System

BuildForce Canada uses a scenario-based forecasting system to assess future construction labour requirements in the heavy industrial, residential, and non-residential construction markets. This labour market information (LMI) system tracks 34 trades and occupations. To further improve the robustness of the system, BuildForce consults with industry stakeholders, including owners, contractors, and labour groups, to validate the scenario assumptions and construction project lists, and seeks input from government on related analysis. The information is then distilled into labour market condition rankings to help industry employers with the management of their respective human resources.

NOVA SCOTIA CONSTRUCTION OUTLOOK

Nova Scotia's construction sector enters the forecast period at a peak. Ongoing and new major projects in the non-residential sector are adding to growth already created by strong levels of new-home construction and renovation work. Total construction investment advanced by 3% over 2021 levels in 2022.

The province's economy enjoyed a strong post-pandemic rebound of nearly 6% in 2021. Although that figure represented a surge in demand, 2022 levels declined only marginally, supported by growth in residential and business investment that was driven by high levels of interprovincial migration. Although population growth is expected to remain strong in 2023, rising interest rates will create some downward pressure on growth, moderating residential investment levels in particular, and eroding consumer confidence. As the global economy recovers in 2024, a modest increase in Nova Scotia's gross domestic product is expected to follow. This should keep growth levels above 2% through to 2027, while higher levels of international migration are expected to keep growth above 1% through the remainder of the forecast period.

Residential construction investment comes off its 2022 peak to contract by 3% in 2023. Rising interest rates contribute to a reduction of about 5% in housing starts. As consumers adjust their expectations to higher interest rates, and population growth increases pressure for new homes, the market cycles back up to a peak of nearly 6,200 units (+11% above 2022 levels) in 2027. Starts then moderate to 2032, losing 9% over 2022 levels. Renovation activity, meanwhile, records an unbroken upward cycle through the forecast period.

As shown in Figure 1, total residential construction employment contracts slightly in 2023 before experiencing an extended run of increases through to a peak of just below 20,100 workers (+7% above 2022 levels) in 2028. Tight labour market conditions

experienced in 2022 are likely to persist for most trades and occupations into 2025, with market conditions balancing thereafter.

Non-residential construction investment is expected to increase slightly in 2023. Delays in construction of a major health facility are expected to maintain industrial, commercial, and institutional (ICI) investment at 2022 levels, while engineering-construction investment is expected to contract slightly. As the global economy recovers, investment levels are expected to rise in both sectors. Engineering construction will rise to a peak in 2028 with work at a major gold mine and on the Boat Harbour clean-up. The start of a proposed green hydrogen and ammonia facility and an additional gold mine project not yet in the outlook could further change the trajectory of employment growth over the medium term. ICI investment also rises to a peak, in 2025, with work in the health care sector. Non-residential employment rises to above 13,000 workers between 2026 and 2028 before contracting to 5% (+270 workers) above 2022 levels by 2032.

The 2023–2032 BuildForce Canada scenario forecast shows that overall construction employment in Nova Scotia will rise to a peak of more than 33,200 workers in 2028 before receding, leaving employment 800 workers (+3%) higher than 2022 levels by 2032.

Historically, the province's construction industry has been successful at bringing in workers to meet rising demands. A projected rise in labour demands of 2,900 workers across the forecast period is likely to exacerbate current market challenges. This challenge is compounded by the need to replace an estimated 7,800 retiring workers over the same period. Combined, these demands will require the industry to recruit an estimated 10,700 workers. Based on historical recruitment levels, the industry is expected to add 6,600 new-entrant workers under the age of 30 from the local population during the forecast period. Unless recruitment increases, however, the sector may need to add as many as 4,100 additional workers.

Figure 1: Construction employment growth outlook, Nova Scotia

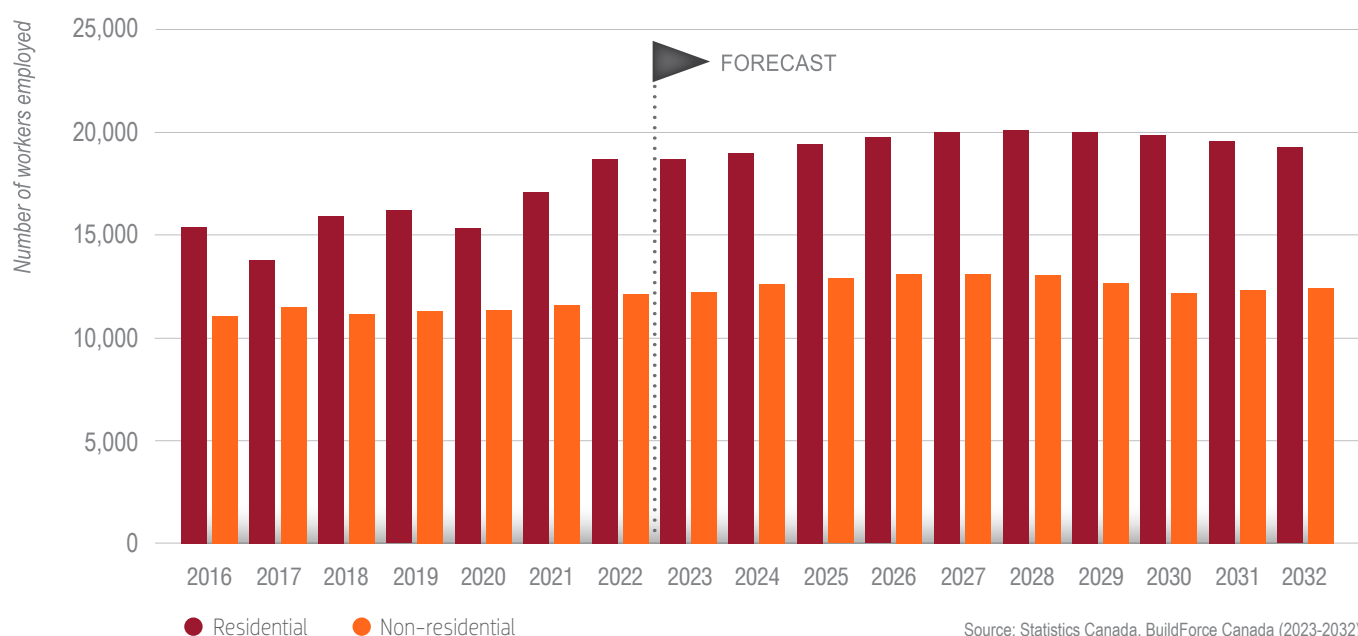
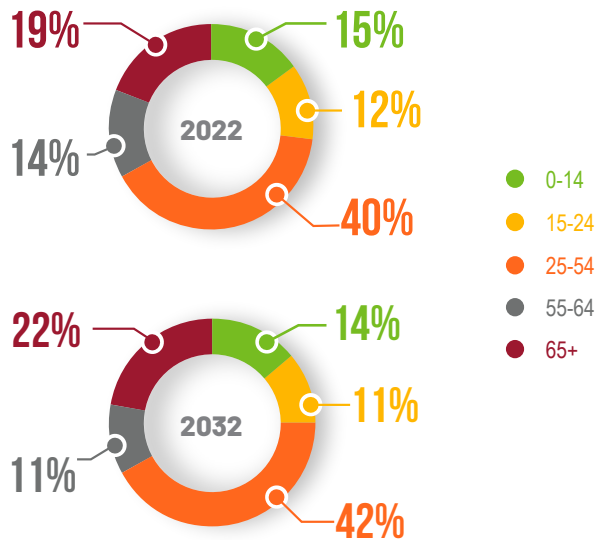
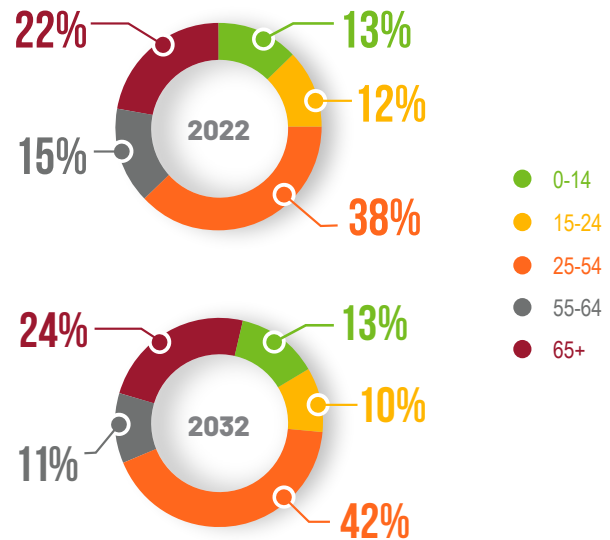


Figure 2: Population age distribution, Canada



Source: BuildForce Canada

Figure 3: Population age distribution, Nova Scotia



Source: BuildForce Canada

DEMOGRAPHICS: CANADA'S AGING POPULATION CREATES WORKFORCE CHALLENGES

Across the country, the share of the labour force aged 65 and over, who are mainly retired, has increased from 15% in 2012 to 19% in 2022. As Figure 2 shows, it is projected to grow again – to 22% – by 2032.

The labour force will be further challenged by a dwindling pool of youth. The group of people aged 15 to 24 years – i.e., people who are poised to enter the labour force – is shrinking as a percentage of the national population. This cohort was 13% in 2012, dropping to 12% in 2022, and is projected to fall to 11% by 2032.

These trends will create challenges for all industries, including construction, as it pertains to labour force recruitment.

There is good news, however. New federal immigration targets, announced in November 2022, call for the addition of 465,000 permanent residents in 2023, 485,000 in 2024, and a further 500,000 in 2025. These new targets should support further growth in the core working-age group of 25–54 years and may help moderate labour market pressures over the next decade. They will also require domestic industries to improve their recruitment of newcomers to supplement their traditional domestic recruitment programs.

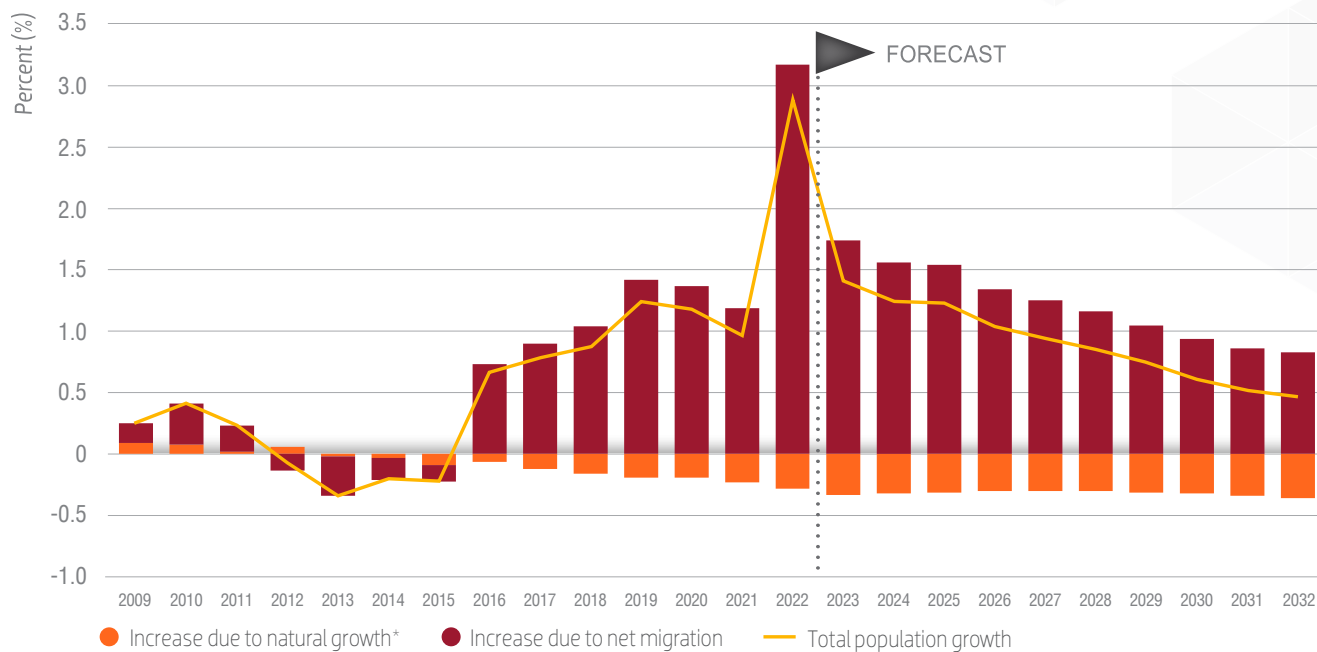
AN AGING POPULATION SUSTAINED BY IN-MIGRATION

Nova Scotia's demographics follow a similar trend. As Figure 3 shows, youth aged 15 to 24 years comprised 12% of the province's population in 2022. That figure is expected to decline to 10% by 2032. Meanwhile, those aged 65 and older, and who are mostly retired, is projected to grow from 22% to 24% over the same period.

Nova Scotia is considered to have a relatively older population. Its rate of population growth¹ has been negative since 2013, in part due to the fact that modern families are having fewer children than previous generations of Canadians.

In-migration to the province saw strong growth in 2022 with the lifting of pandemic-related restrictions and a return to in-person learning among post-secondary students. Although this level of in-migration is unlikely to be sustained, migration levels are expected to remain at or above historically high levels into 2027. The addition of these migrants in their prime working-age and child-bearing years will help to sustain some upward pressure on fertility rates. This will help preserve the natural rate of population growth over the decade. Combined with positive migration projections, this natural growth rate will help to generate population gains of close to, if not more than, 1% in the medium term and continue with a relatively high rate between 0.5% and 1% in the latter years of the decade.

¹ The **natural rate of population growth** refers to the growth in the population due to the number of births relative to the number of deaths, which leads to a positive or negative natural rate.

Figure 4: Sources of population growth (%), Nova Scotia

* **Natural rate of population growth** refers to the growth in the population due to the number of births relative to the number of deaths, which leads to a positive or negative natural rate.

Source: Statistics Canada, BuildForce Canada (2023-2032)

Figure 4 shows the sources of population growth in Nova Scotia over the forecast period.

SECTOR INSIGHTS

The following sections provide sector-specific insights into the provincial residential and non-residential labour markets.

The BuildForce LMI system tracks supply and accounts for the change in the available labour force, including retirements, new entrants², and net mobility³.

BuildForce assesses market conditions for 34 construction trades and occupations using a ranking system that combines measures of the change in employment, unemployment, net mobility, and adjustments based on industry input. The rankings reflect residential and non-residential market conditions unique to the

province based on current and proposed construction activity. In addition, assumptions on provincial economic and population growth, new entrants to the labour force, and migration patterns (interprovincial and international) are built into the forecast scenario and included in the ranking assessment.

The rankings for some trades are suppressed due to the small size of the workforce (fewer than 100 workers) and limited statistical reliability when assessing labour market conditions at the sector level. Some trades are also excluded because they typically do not work in the sector being assessed (e.g., boilermakers and millwrights in residential construction, and homebuilding and renovation managers in non-residential construction).

For Nova Scotia, rankings are reported for 18 residential and 24 non-residential trades and occupations.

² **New entrants** are measured by applying the traditional proportion of the provincial labour force that enters the construction industry. The projected estimate across the forecast period assumes that the construction industry can recruit this group in competition with other industries.

³ **Net mobility** refers to the movement of labour in and out of the local construction industry labour force. In-mobility captures the movement into the labour force of out-of-province industry workers and/or workers from outside the industry. Many members of this group will move quickly out of the provincial labour force as work declines, referred to as out-mobility.

RESIDENTIAL SECTOR

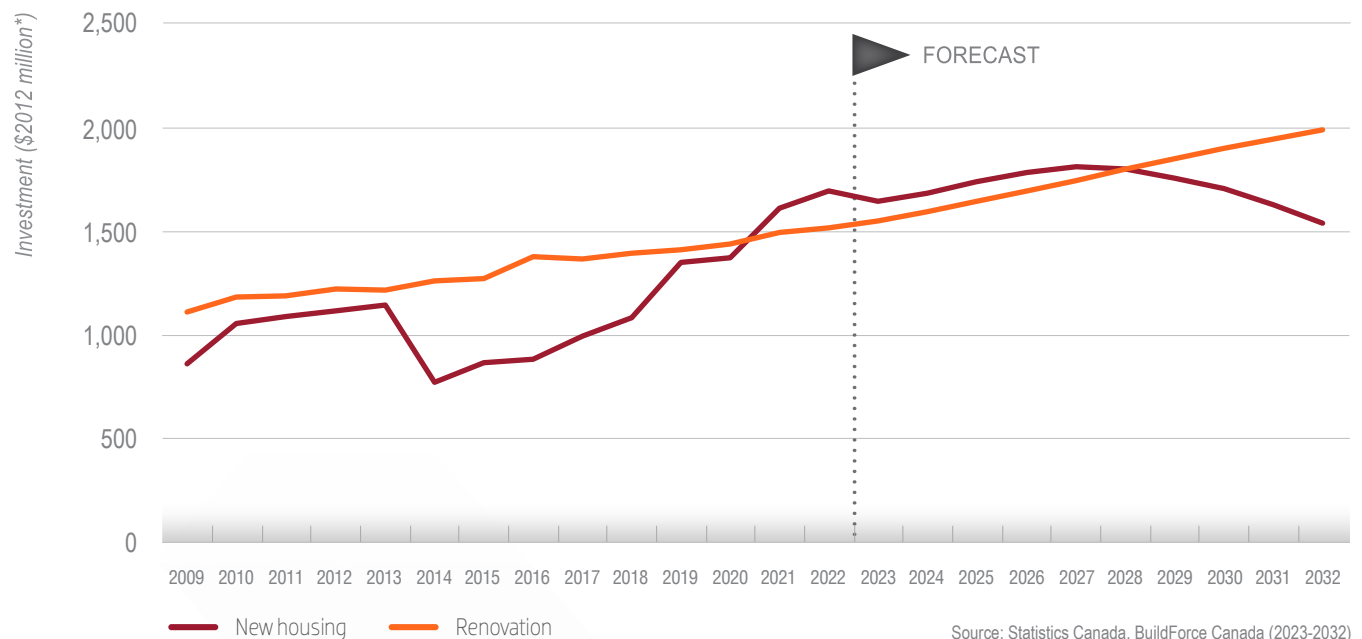
Nova Scotia's residential construction sector entered the pandemic on a high, supported by a combination of strong levels of immigration, record-low interest rates, and low vacancy rates in and around the Halifax metropolitan area. Housing starts decreased slightly in 2022 from the elevated levels recorded in 2021. As consumers adjust expectations to higher interest rates, starts are expected to rise in 2023 and continue rising to a peak in 2027. Thereafter, housing starts are expected to decline through to 2032. Overall starts are expected to be 11% lower in 2032 than the 2022 start point, though despite this decline, housing-start levels are expected to remain well above historical levels.

Renovation investment increased in 2022 and is expected to continue rising due to the aging of the housing stock and increases in incomes that enable homeowners to invest in upgrades to their existing homes. Figure 5 shows the anticipated renovation and new-housing investment trends for residential construction.

Residential construction employment jumped by more than 1,600 workers (+9%) in 2022 as the industry contended with significant growth in renovation and new-housing activity. Employment is expected to step down slightly in 2023 and 2024 as affordability erodes the new-housing market, in particular. Thereafter, it rises to a peak by 2028 before being sustained at well-above historical levels through the end of the forecast period. The sector is expected to add 570 workers across the forecast period, with gains in renovation (+1,300 workers; +18%) and maintenance (+500 workers; +19%) activity more than offsetting losses of over 1,200 workers (-14%) in new-housing construction.

Note that federal efforts to double the number of new homes built across Canada over the next 10 years were not factored into this analysis.

Figure 5: Residential construction investment, Nova Scotia



* \$2012 millions indicates that the investment values are in year 2012 dollars (base year), that is, adjusted for inflation. This is used to calculate the real physical year-to-year change of the value of construction, factoring out growth (increase in value) due to increases in prices.

RESIDENTIAL RANKINGS, RISKS, AND MOBILITY

Table 1 shows labour market conditions for the province's key residential trades and occupations in 2022. High levels of housing starts in 2021 and 2022 created exceptionally tight labour markets in nearly every trade. These conditions are expected to moderate slightly in 2023 and 2024, but labour markets are unlikely to return to balance until 2026.

MARKET RANKINGS

1

Workers meeting employer qualifications are available in local markets to meet an increase in demand at the current offered rate of compensation and other current working conditions. Excess supply is apparent and there is a risk of losing workers to other markets.

2

Workers meeting employer qualifications are available in local markets to meet an increase in demand at the current offered rate of compensation and other working conditions.

3

The availability of workers meeting employer qualifications in the local market may be limited by large projects, plant shutdowns or other short-term increases in demand. Employers may need to compete to attract needed workers. Established patterns of recruiting and mobility are sufficient to meet job requirements.

4

Workers meeting employer qualifications are generally not available in local markets to meet any increase. Employers will need to compete to attract additional workers. Recruiting and mobility may extend beyond traditional sources and practices.

5

Needed workers meeting employer qualifications are not available in local markets to meet current demand so that projects or production may be delayed or deferred. There is excess demand, competition is intense and recruiting reaches to remote markets.

Table 1: Residential market rankings, Nova Scotia

TRADES AND OCCUPATIONS – RESIDENTIAL	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030	2031	2032
Bricklayers	5	4	4	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
Carpenters	5	4	4	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
Concrete finishers	5	4	4	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
Construction estimators	4	4	4	4	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
Construction managers	5	4	4	4	4	3	3	3	3	3	3
Contractors and supervisors	5	4	4	4	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
Electricians	4	3	4	4	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
Floor covering installers	5	4	4	4	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
Heavy equipment operators (except crane)	4	4	4	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
Home building and renovation managers	5	4	4	4	4	4	3	3	3	3	3
Painters and decorators (except interior decorators)	5	4	4	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
Plasterers, drywall installers and finishers, and lathers	5	4	4	4	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
Plumbers	5	4	4	4	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
Residential and commercial installers and servicers	5	4	4	4	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
Roofers and shinglers	5	4	4	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
Sheet metal workers	5	4	4	4	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
Trades helpers and labourers	5	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
Truck drivers	5	4	4	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3

Source: BuildForce Canada

NON-RESIDENTIAL SECTOR

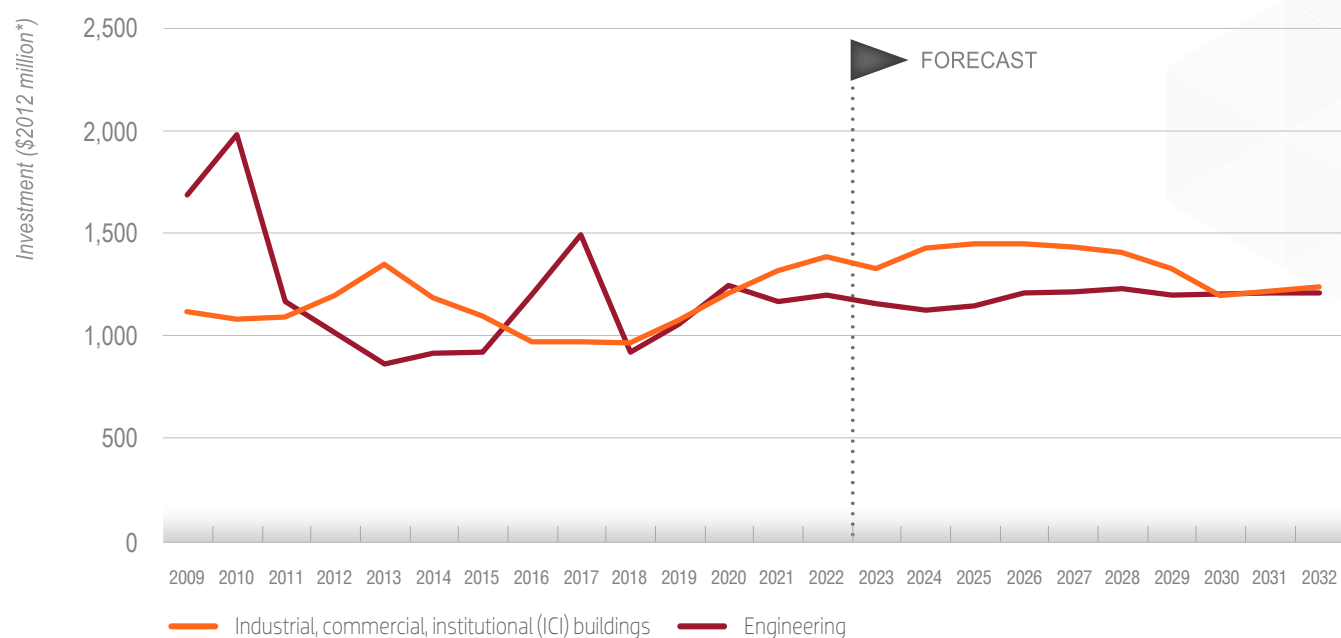
As shown in Figure 6, Nova Scotia's non-residential construction sector experienced moderate growth in 2022, with gains of 3% and 5% in the engineering-construction and ICI sectors, respectively. Industrial-building investment has been supported by a pickup in factory and warehousing capacity, while institutional and government investment was supported by education and health care projects. Investment is expected to cycle back down in 2023 as the global economy puts strain on business spending. It cycles back up between 2026 and 2028.

Engineering-construction investment is expected to experience a minor downward cycle in the short term, contracting by 3% and 4% in 2023 and 2024. A provincial capital plan is expected to keep

infrastructure-related investment elevated into 2023, but this recedes in later years. Investment cycles back up by mid-decade with work at a gold mine and several hospital projects. The start of a proposed green hydrogen and ammonia facility and an additional gold mine project not yet in the outlook could significantly change the trajectory of employment growth over the medium term. Absent those approvals, engineering-construction employment is expected to rise to a peak in 2026 before contracting by 2% over 2022 levels by 2032.

ICI employment follows a similar path, rising to a peak in 2026 before contracting by 1% over 2022 levels by 2032.

Overall, non-residential employment is expected to add 250 workers (+2%) over the forecast period.

Figure 6: Non-residential construction investment, Nova Scotia

* \$2012 millions indicates that the investment values are in year 2012 dollars (base year), that is, adjusted for inflation. This is used to calculate the real physical year-to-year change of the value of construction, factoring out growth (increase in value) due to increases in prices.

Source: Statistics Canada, BuildForce Canada (2023-2032)

Table 2 summarizes the estimated percent change in non-residential employment by sector across three periods: the short term (2023–2025), the medium term (2026–2028), and the long term (2029–2032).

Table 2: Changes in non-residential employment by sector, Nova Scotia

SECTOR		% CHANGE 2023–2025	% CHANGE 2026–2028	% CHANGE 2029–2032
Total non-residential employment		6%	1%	-5%
ICI* buildings	Industrial	-8%	3%	-2%
	Commercial, institutional and government	12%	-1%	-9%
Engineering	Highways and bridges	-18%	-3%	-2%
	Heavy industrial	27%	12%	-8%
	Other engineering	34%	-4%	-18%
Maintenance		-2%	7%	8%

Source: Statistics Canada, BuildForce Canada (2023-2032)

* industrial, commercial, institutional

NON-RESIDENTIAL RANKINGS, RISKS, AND MOBILITY

Table 3 shows that market conditions were strained across nearly every trade and occupation in 2022, with six trades achieving rankings of “5.” As some of the work in 2022 carries over into 2023, pressures will moderate, but only slightly. As activity rises again in 2024 on the strength of increasing investment in health care, labour markets will further tighten for many trades.

Labour markets are not expected to return to balanced conditions until 2026–2027.

There is a significant upside risk to this scenario. Several proposed resource development projects (e.g., hydrogen, gold mine) that are not yet in the outlook could increase demands and increase recruiting challenges over the medium term.

The widespread conversion of ICI buildings to the greater use of electricity for heating and cooling is excluded from this report, as these efforts are still in their early phases and have had only minor impacts on overall construction labour markets. As these efforts accelerate, they will be added to future BuildForce Canada outlook reports.

Table 3: Non-residential market rankings, Nova Scotia

TRADES AND OCCUPATIONS – NON-RESIDENTIAL	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030	2031	2032
Boilermakers	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
Bricklayers	5	5	5	4	3	3	3	2	2	3	3
Carpenters	5	4	4	4	3	3	3	3	2	3	3
Construction estimators	4	4	4	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
Construction managers	4	4	4	4	4	3	3	3	3	3	3
Construction millwrights and industrial mechanics	3	4	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
Contractors and supervisors	4	4	4	4	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
Crane operators	4	4	4	4	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
Electricians	4	4	5	4	3	3	3	2	2	3	3
Elevator constructors and mechanics	5	4	5	4	3	3	3	3	2	3	3
Glaziers	4	4	5	4	4	3	3	2	2	3	3
Heavy equipment operators (except crane)	4	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
Heavy-duty equipment mechanics	4	4	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
Insulators	3	4	4	3	3	3	3	2	2	3	3
Ironworkers and structural metal fabricators	4	4	5	3	3	2	2	3	3	3	3
Painters and decorators (except interior decorators)	4	4	4	4	3	3	3	3	2	3	3
Plasterers, drywall installers and finishers, and lathers	5	4	5	4	4	3	3	2	2	3	3
Plumbers	5	4	5	5	4	3	2	2	2	3	3
Refrigeration and air conditioning mechanics	4	4	5	5	4	3	2	2	2	3	3
Sheet metal workers	4	4	5	4	3	3	3	2	2	3	3
Steamfitters, pipefitters and sprinkler system installers	5	4	4	4	4	3	2	2	3	3	3
Trades helpers and labourers	4	4	4	3	3	3	3	3	2	3	3
Truck drivers	4	4	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
Welders and related machine operators	4	4	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3

Source: BuildForce Canada

BUILDING A SUSTAINABLE LABOUR FORCE

THE AVAILABLE LABOUR FORCE

Employment and labour force levels showed further growth in 2022. The inability of the labour force to grow as quickly as employment, however, forced the provincial construction unemployment rate to a record low of 3% (seasonally unadjusted) in September 2022.

Nova Scotia's construction industry will likely need to recruit and retain as many as 10,700 additional workers over the forecast period to keep pace with expansion and replace an expected 7,800 retiring workers, or 24% of the 2022 construction labour force.

Based on provincial population projections, this hiring requirement may be partly met through a potential 6,600 new-entrant workers under the age of 30 available to be recruited from the local population, leaving a gap of 4,100 workers that will likely need to be recruited (and retained):

- through the additional recruitment and training of youth
- through the additional recruitment of individuals from equity-deserving groups traditionally under-represented in the construction sector
- from the construction labour forces of neighbouring provinces with higher levels of unemployment
- from other industries in the province employing workers with the skill sets required by the industry
- from outside the country through permanent immigration

Figure 7 provides a summary of the estimated changes in the construction labour force across the full 2023–2032 forecast period.

LABOUR FORCE DIVERSIFICATION

APPRENTICESHIP

Apprenticeship is a key source of labour for the construction industry. Prior to the pandemic, new registrations in the 20 largest trade programs had begun to recover, following several years of decline (see Figure 8). Despite this, new registrations in 2019 were approximately 4% lower than in 2010. Completions have been on an upward trend over the past decade, which may be attributed to increased construction activity and hours available for apprentices to complete their trade program. New registrations have been declining at a faster rate than trade employment, which poses the risk for an insufficient number of newly certified journeypersons to sustain workforce requirements over the long term. Selected trades, namely Heavy-Duty Equipment Technician, Powerline Technician, and Refrigeration and Air Conditioning Mechanic, have seen an increase in new registrations over the past decade.

Table 4 provides a trade-by-trade breakdown of the anticipated certification requirements to meet the construction industry's share of employment and replacement demand over the scenario period. Based on projected new registrations, several trades are at risk of undersupplying the number of new journeypersons required by 2032. Trades within this group include Mobile Crane Operator, Roofer, Carpenter, Gas Fitter, Welder, Steamfitter/Pipefitter, Industrial Mechanic, Heavy Equipment Technician, Construction Electrician, and Bricklayer.

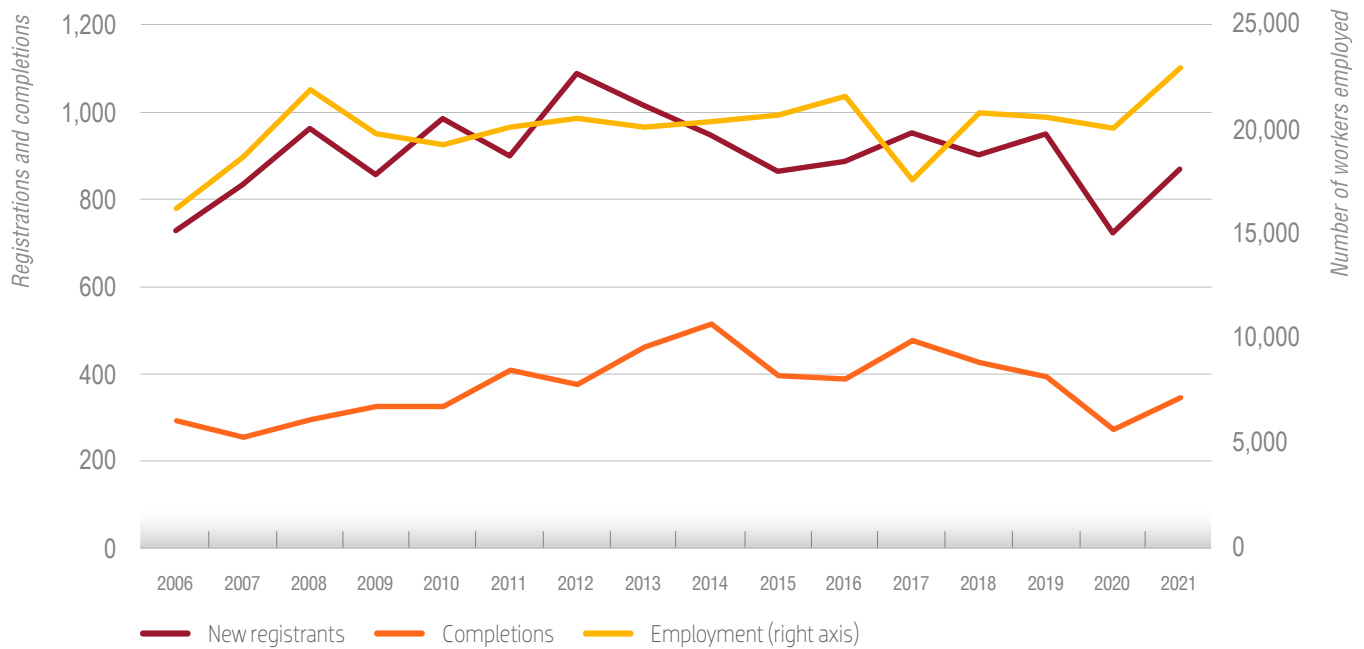
Figure 7: Changes in the construction labour force, Nova Scotia



* Net mobility refers to the number of workers needed to be brought into the industry from other industries or other provinces to meet rising demands or the number of workers that exit the industry in downturns. Positive net mobility means that industry must attract workers, while negative net mobility arises from an excess supply of workers in the local construction labour force.

Note: Due to rounding, numbers may not add up to the totals indicated.

Source: BuildForce Canada

Figure 8: New apprenticeship registrations, completions, and trade employment, Nova Scotia**Table 4: Estimated construction certification demand and projected target of new entrants by trade, Nova Scotia, 2023 to 2032**

Trade	Total certification demand – construction	Target new registrants – construction	Apprentice certification supply risk – all industries
Mobile Crane Operator	64	405	●
Roofer	116	613	●
Carpenters	1,479	4,323	●
Gas Fitter	7	60	●
Welder	85	158	●
Steamfitter/Pipefitter	76	154	●
Industrial Mechanic (Millwright)	30	41	●
Heavy-Duty Equipment Technician	46	63	●
Construction Electrician	839	1,414	●
Bricklayer	69	103	●
Boilermaker	41	62	●
Industrial Electrician	83	163	●
Plumber	272	443	●
Sheet Metal Worker	56	79	●

- Certifications required exceed projected completions
- Certifications required in line with projected completions
- Projected completions exceed certifications required

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Table 4: Estimated construction certification demand and projected target of new entrants by trade, Nova Scotia, 2023 to 2032 (continued)

Trade	Total certification demand – construction	Target new registrants – construction	Apprentice certification supply risk – all industries
Powerline Technician	12	9	●
Metal Fabricator (Fitter)	29	22	●
Ironworker (reinforcing)	7	4	●
Sprinkler System Installer	12	11	●
Refrigeration and Air Conditioning Mechanic	98	105	●
Insulator (heat and frost)	25	34	●

- Certifications required exceed projected completions
- Certifications required in line with projected completions
- Projected completions exceed certifications required

Source: BuildForce Canada

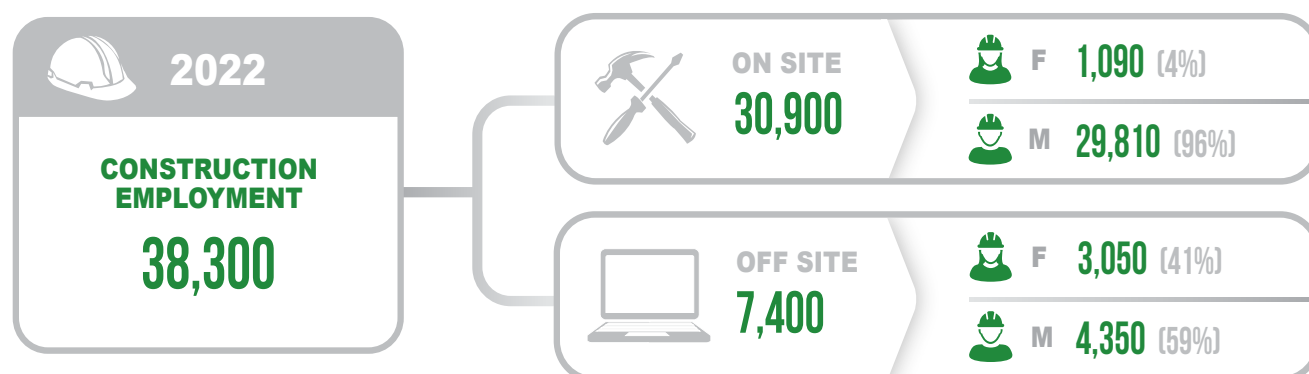
UNDER-REPRESENTED GROUPS OF WORKERS

Due in part to lower fertility rates and smaller family sizes in Canada for more than three decades, the share of younger Canadians available to enter the labour force has been in decline for several years. As the baby boomer generation of workers commences retirement over the next decade, the competition for younger workers will be intense. To help mitigate the impact of this demographic shift, the construction industry must diversify its recruitment. In order to succeed, the industry must increase recruitment of individuals from groups traditionally under-represented in the current construction labour force, including women, Indigenous People, and newcomers.

In 2022, there were approximately 4,150 women employed in Nova Scotia's construction industry, of which 26% worked on site, directly on construction projects, while the remaining 74% worked off site, primarily in administrative and management-related occupations. Of the 30,900 tradespeople employed in the industry, women made up only 4% (see Figure 9).

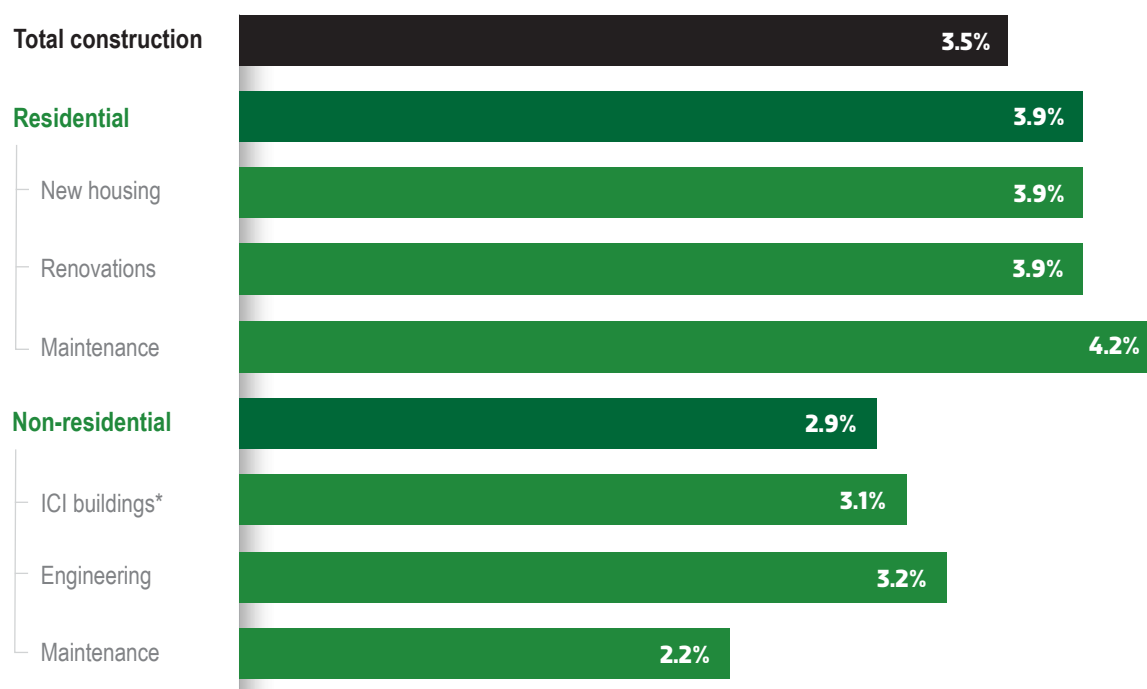
The estimated 1,090 tradeswomen in Nova Scotia are represented across all sectors of construction, but given the nature of construction work in the province, women account for a higher share of total tradespeople (3.9%) in residential construction. Across sectors, residential maintenance construction has the highest representation of women, accounting for 4.2% of the workforce (see Figure 10). The top five trades and occupations in which women tend to be employed are trade helpers and labourers (23% of all tradeswomen), carpenters (23%), painters and decorators (10%), construction managers (10%) and contractors and supervisors (9%).

The Indigenous population is the fastest growing population in Canada and therefore presents recruitment opportunities for Nova Scotia's construction industry. In 2021, Indigenous workers accounted for approximately 5% of the province's construction labour force, which is a slight decline from the levels observed in 2016.⁴ This share is consistent with the share of Indigenous People represented in the overall labour force (see Table 5). As the Indigenous population continues to expand, recruitment efforts will need to be dedicated to increasing the industry's share of the population into the labour force.

Figure 9: Detailed construction employment by gender, Nova Scotia, 2022

Source: BuildForce Canada calculations based on Statistics Canada's Labour Force Survey (LFS) and Census of the Population.

⁴ Statistics Canada, 2021 Census, custom data request

Figure 10: Women's share of total direct trades and occupations (on site), Nova Scotia

* industrial, commercial, institutional

Source: BuildForce Canada calculations based on Statistics Canada's Labour Force Survey (LFS) and Census of the Population.

Table 5: Representation of Indigenous population in provincial construction workforce, Nova Scotia

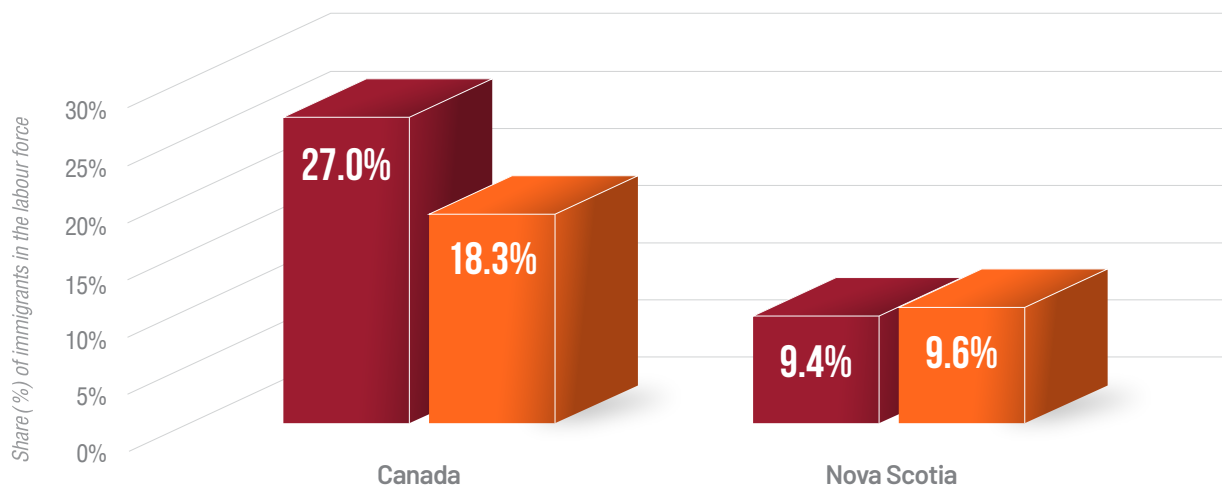
Industry		Indigenous	Non-Indigenous	Total	Indigenous share of total workforce, %
Construction	2016	1,785	31,770	33,560	5.3%
	2021	1,780	33,935	35,725	5.0%
All industries	2016	24,075	441,255	465,330	5.2%
	2021	23,785	452,515	476,290	5.0%

Source: BuildForce Canada calculations based on Statistics Canada's 2021 and 2016 Census of the Population

Nova Scotia's construction industry may also leverage newcomers (immigrants) to Canada over the forecast period to meet labour requirements. Due to the declining natural rates of population growth, immigrants are the primary source of labour force growth in the province. Immigrants have been playing an increasingly important role in replenishing the workforce, with the share of immigrants in the workforce doubling over the past decade, increasing from 5% in 2011 to 10% in 2021. While the province has been successful in attracting and integrating immigrants into the labour force, the province's share of immigrants is notably below

the share in Canada overall (see Figure 11). Nova Scotia is the only province where the share of immigrants in the construction industry outpaces the share in the overall labour force.

Based on historical settlement trends, the province is expected to welcome 130,570 new international migrants between 2023 and 2032. As these individuals will make up an increasing share of the province's core working-age population, additional recruitment efforts will be required to ensure the construction industry continues to recruit its share of newcomers into the labour force.

Figure 11: Share (%) of immigrants in the construction labour force, 2021

● All industries ● Construction

Source: BuildForce Canada calculations based on Statistics Canada's 2021 data.

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

Nova Scotia is in the midst of a period of significant short-term construction growth.

New housing is expected to show some slowdown into 2023 before cycling back upward into 2028. Growth in the market is being influenced by competing factors: affordability on one side and a growing population on the other. Renovation investment, meanwhile, is expected to rise continuously through the forecast period due an aging housing stock and increases in homeowner incomes. These forces combine to sustain pressures on most trades and occupations in the residential labour market through at least 2024.

The province's non-residential market, meanwhile, will rise in line with the timing of major projects. The sector contracts in 2023 as the global economy puts strain on business spending. It cycles back up between 2026 and 2028 with work on several key projects such as mining and hospitals. Labour market conditions enter the forecast period strained, and conditions are not expected to ease for many trades until 2026 or 2027.

Careful management will be required to meet rising short-term demands driven by major projects, while balancing against an aging workforce and the expected retirement of almost 7,800 workers, or 24% of the current labour force. The province's older population demographics may make recruiting young workers more challenging and require industry to place greater emphasis on mobility, in-migration, and international immigration as key sources of labour supply across the forecast period.

The industry scenario-based approach developed by BuildForce Canada to assess future labour market conditions provides a powerful planning tool for industry, government, and other stakeholders to better track labour market conditions and identify potential pressure points. The anticipated labour market conditions reflect current industry expectations based on proposed major-project schedules. Any changes to these assumptions present risks and potentially alter anticipated market conditions.

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