

Q4 2023

# Business Outlook



**DUBLIN**  
CHAMBER

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# Introduction



This report outlines the results of Dublin Chamber's Q4 Business Outlook Survey, conducted from October 26th to November 22nd. Over 170 companies throughout the Dublin region participated in the survey, representing the diverse makeup of Dublin Chamber members with regard to size and sector. This edition of the survey was strategically carried out during a period where the voice of Dublin businesses plays a significant and timely role in informing policy priorities for the upcoming year. The information gained from the survey allows for the tailoring of Dublin Chamber's lobbying positions heading into 2024, an election year. In addition to Dublin business priorities, this report touches on issues such as safety, transport, legislation, and the minimum wage.

The survey was set out to highlight issues of concern for Dublin businesses. Firstly, by considering companies' individual priorities, before turning focus to the concerns that face Dublin as a whole, and how these problems impact businesses in the region.

A variation of 'what are the top priorities for Dublin' is a question that runs consistently through our quarterly business outlook surveys, as the answers gained are critical in aligning lobbying priorities to those of member needs. This consistency allows for comparison between previous years in which the question was asked. Attracting / Retaining / Upskilling staff remains the top priority for Dublin businesses for the third consecutive year. Over three-in-five businesses (62%) highlighted the staffing concern as their leading priority.

At the onset of 2023, Dublin businesses outlined affordable housing, poor infrastructure and skills and labour shortages as the toughest challenges facing Dublin. This remains to be the case when looking at the responses of the Dublin business community heading into 2024.

Physical safety and security have seen a significant increase in those highlighting the issue as a top challenge for the city, county, and region. A 24-percentage point increase in those reporting physical safety concerns as a top issue affecting Dublin since Q1 this year, quantifies how Dublin Chamber members view the developments regarding safety over the past twelve months. Almost all Dublin businesses (95%) have indicated the need for higher visibility on the streets of Dublin. Safety is a growing issue for Dublin businesses and Dublin Chamber's advocacy has matched the members' concerns.

Another aspect which has witnessed significant change over a short period of time is access to

finance. Accounting for only 4% of businesses' top priorities at the beginning of the year, the share of those reporting access to finance as a priority has increased drastically to approximately 16.5%. A fourfold increase despite the base figure of four percent being registered only nine months ago in Q1 2023.

Almost half of Dublin businesses (46%) do not believe the proposed bus gates on the quays will adequately reduce private car usage, beating the one-in-three (35%) who believe it will provide the means for a modal shift from private cars. Many Dublin Chamber members registered their own opinions with one-in-ten (10%) of respondents providing their insight which is set out below.

Regarding the use of schemes aimed at reducing climate emissions almost three-in-ten state that there is presently a lack of awareness of these schemes. One-in-five highlighted that the administrative burden is too high, while slightly less than one-in-five businesses registered that these schemes' application processes are too arduous - disincentivising applications entirely. Additionally, Dublin businesses reported that the current system does not meet the needs of their business (33%) versus the one-in-three firms (31%) who said it does meet their needs.

Increases to the minimum wage are not expected to yield an impact for almost two-thirds of businesses (65%). Almost one-in-five businesses (18%) expect a loss of profits in relation to the increase in minimum wage outlined in Budget 2024. This is a larger proportion of businesses with greater than fifty staff, as over one-in-four (26%) larger businesses believe a loss of profits to be the result of this increase.



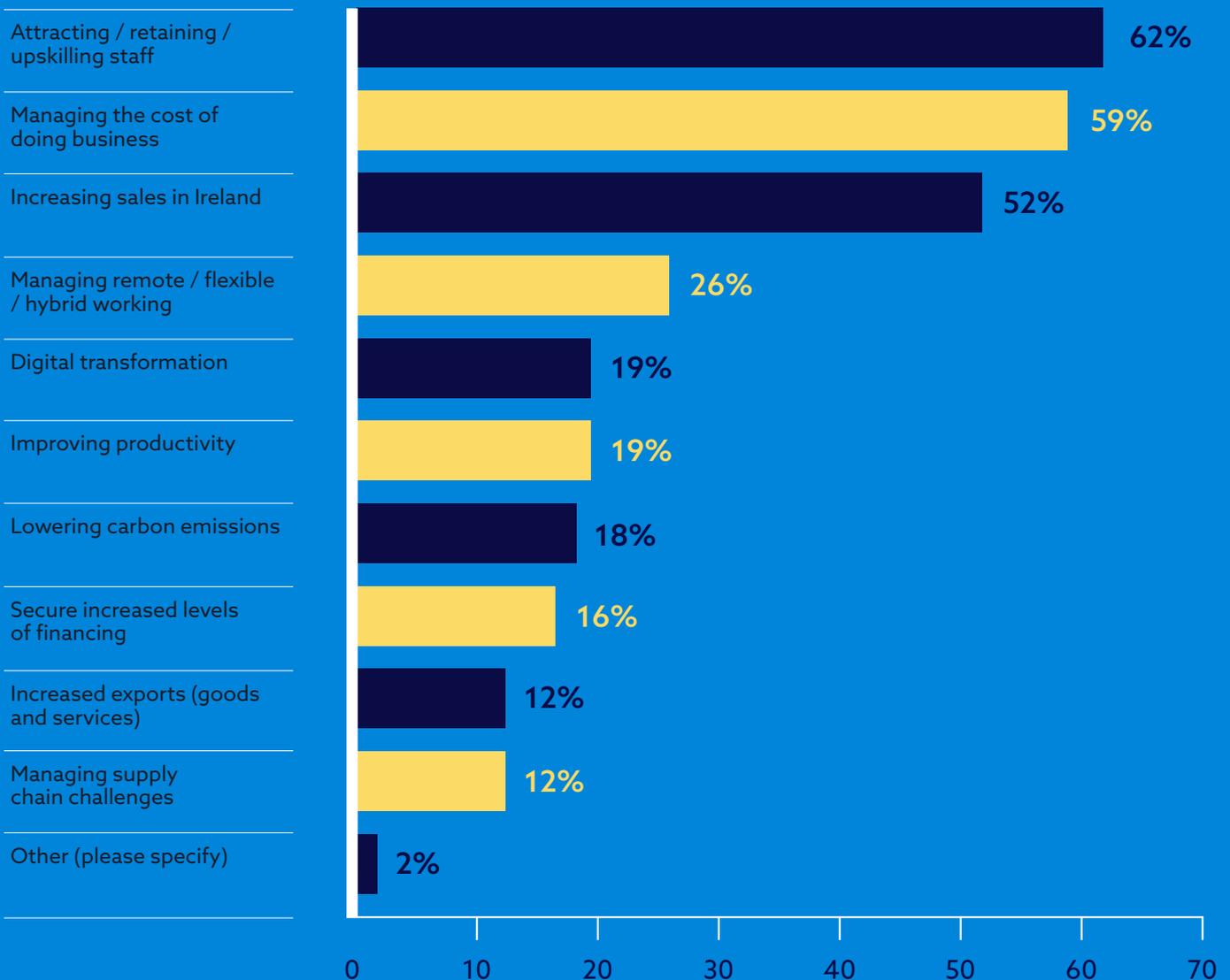
If you have any comments on our survey or want to discuss our findings, please contact us at [policy@dublinchamber.ie](mailto:policy@dublinchamber.ie)

# Dublin Business Priorities

Dublin businesses outlined their priorities for their businesses heading into 2024, and once again staffing concerns from attracting, retaining and upskilling staff is the top priority. Three-in-five businesses (62%), highlighted these staffing

concerns as a top priority for their business heading into 2024, making it the third consecutive year that human capital is the primary issue across the Dublin region.

## What are your company's top three priorities for 2024?



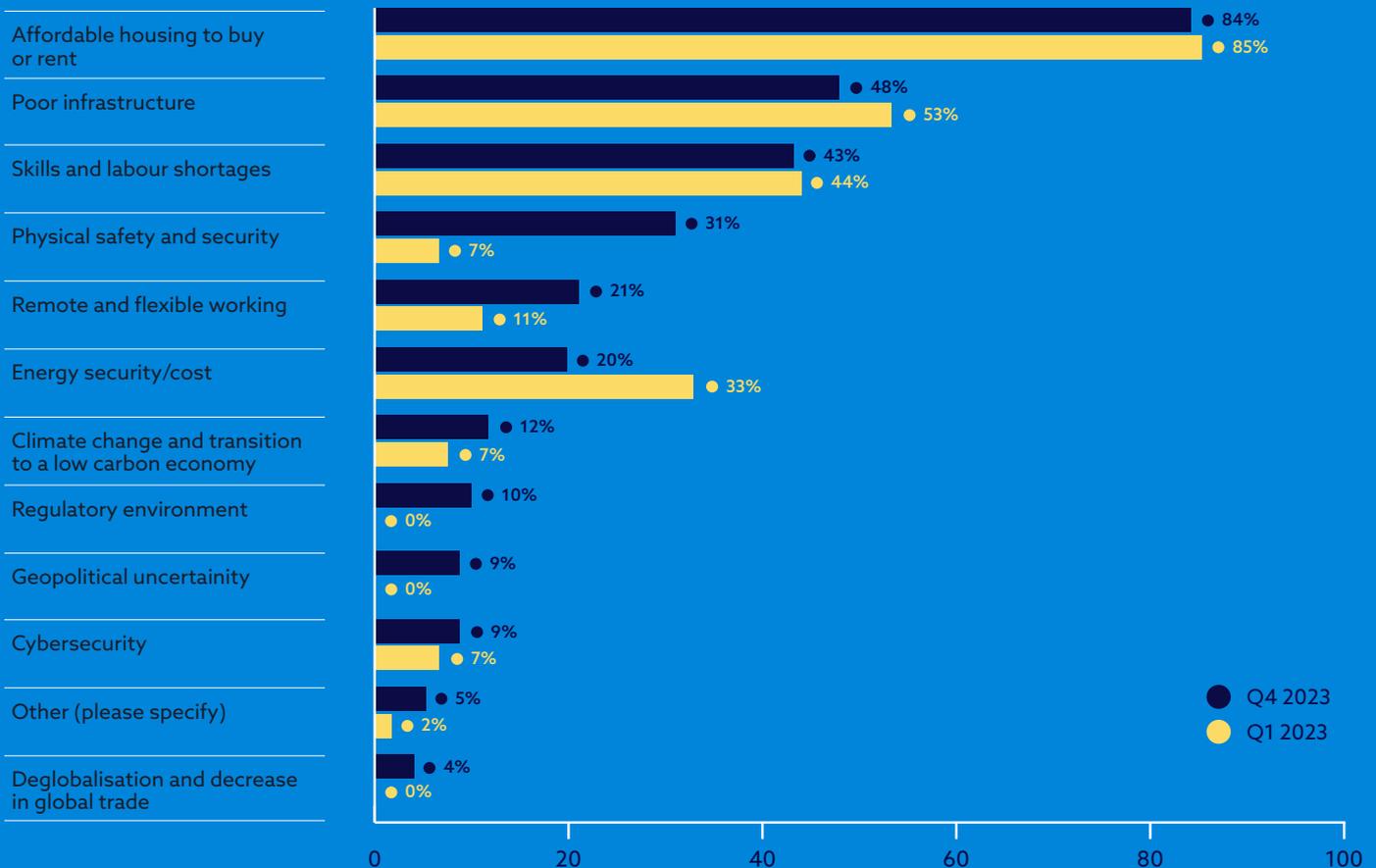
Six-in-ten businesses (59%) said managing the cost of doing business is a priority for their business going into 2024. This is in line with this report’s Expectation Index which reveals that operating costs are expected to increase, with approximately three-in-four Dublin businesses (73%) expecting an increase in operational costs heading into the next quarter.

Slightly over one-in- two businesses (52%) are choosing to prioritise increasing their domestic sales in Ireland next quarter and early 2024. This is the primary concern for businesses with less than fifty staff employed, with over three-in-five businesses under fifty staff choosing increased domestic sales as its number one focus heading into 2024. These companies also highlight

securing increased levels of financing as a high value concern with over one-in-five small/medium size companies (21%) assigning it as a priority.

Increases in the number of businesses prioritising access to finance is seen throughout survey respondents regardless of employment numbers. Access to increased levels of finance has experienced the largest difference between Q1 and Q4 of 2023. At the beginning of the year, less than one-in-twenty Dublin businesses (4%) highlighted access to finance as a top priority for 2023. This quarter, the narrative is different as 16.5% of respondents highlight access to finance as a top priority for 2024. This increase, of over twelve percentage points, marks a reemerging struggle for businesses to attract finance.

**What are the top three challenges facing Dublin from a business perspective?  
A comparison; Q1 2023 vs. Q4 2023**

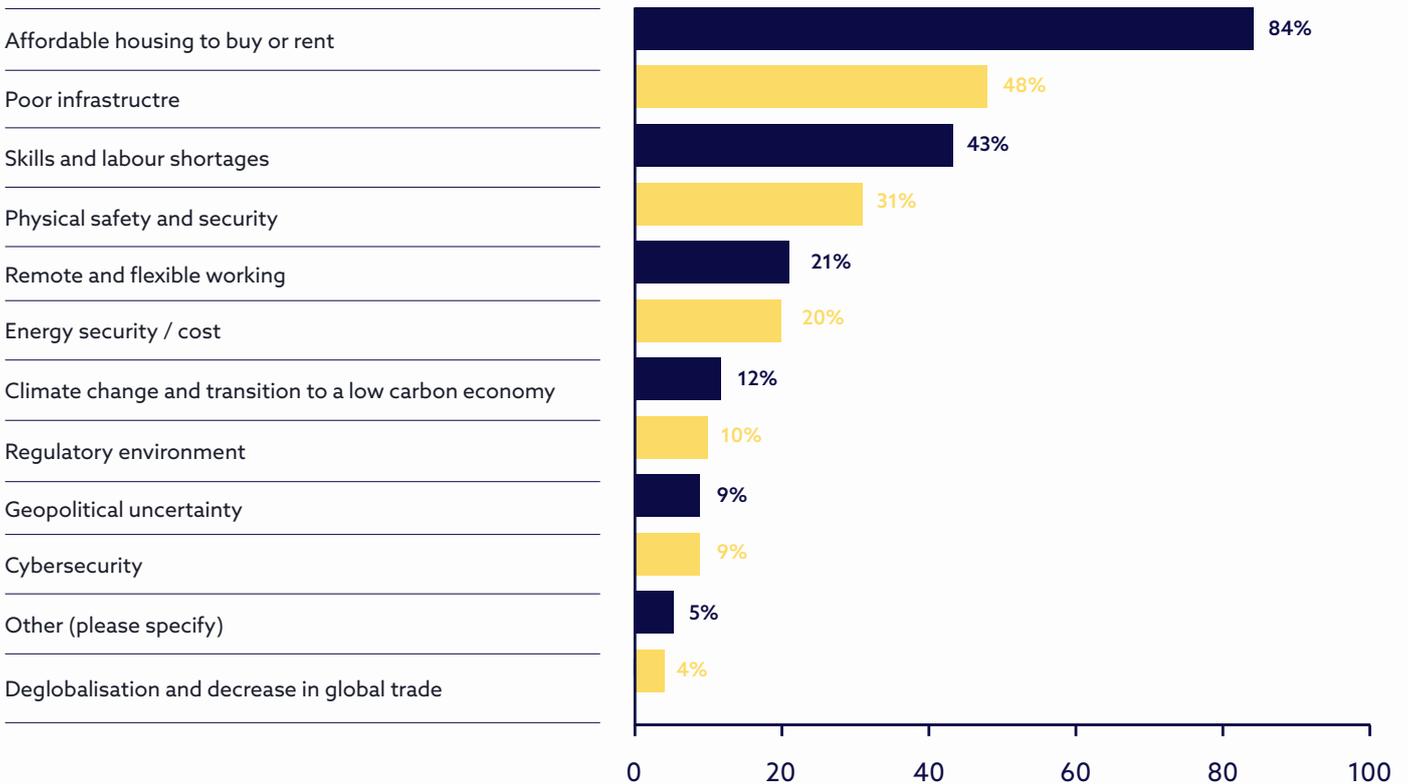


# Challenges Facing Dublin in 2023

Dublin Chamber provides the following insights and recommendations considering the current angel investor landscape in light of operating costs increasing and securing increasing levels of financing’s position as a growing priority for Dublin businesses.

- 5% requirement of shareholding for 3 years to avail of the relief is not practical.
- The certification process is an issue due to it being run by Revenue, which will lead to investors not engaging.
- The relief is pitched at a low return on investment.
- There needs to be a role for EI in the future especially around certification.

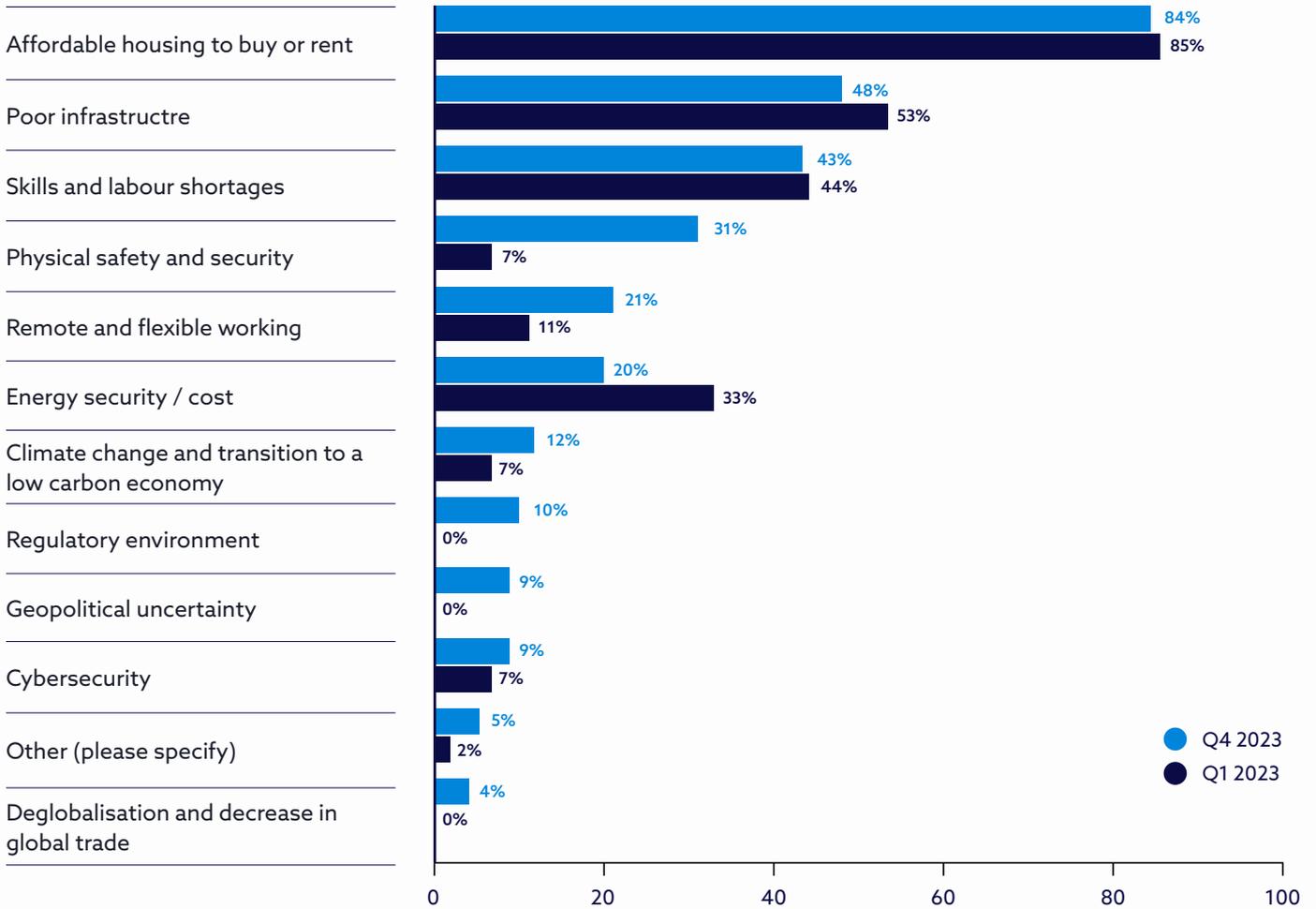
## What are the top three challenges facing Dublin from a business perspective?



Over four-in-five Dublin businesses (85%) report affordable housing, to buy or to rent as the biggest challenge facing Dublin from a business perspective. Just under half of respondents claim poor infrastructure (49%) as the top challenge, with skills and labour shortages taking the third

spot with over two-in-five of Dublin businesses selecting this as the top issue. Reflecting on how these factors have changed since the start of the year, affordable housing, poor infrastructure and skills and labour shortages remain the largest challenges facing Dublin.

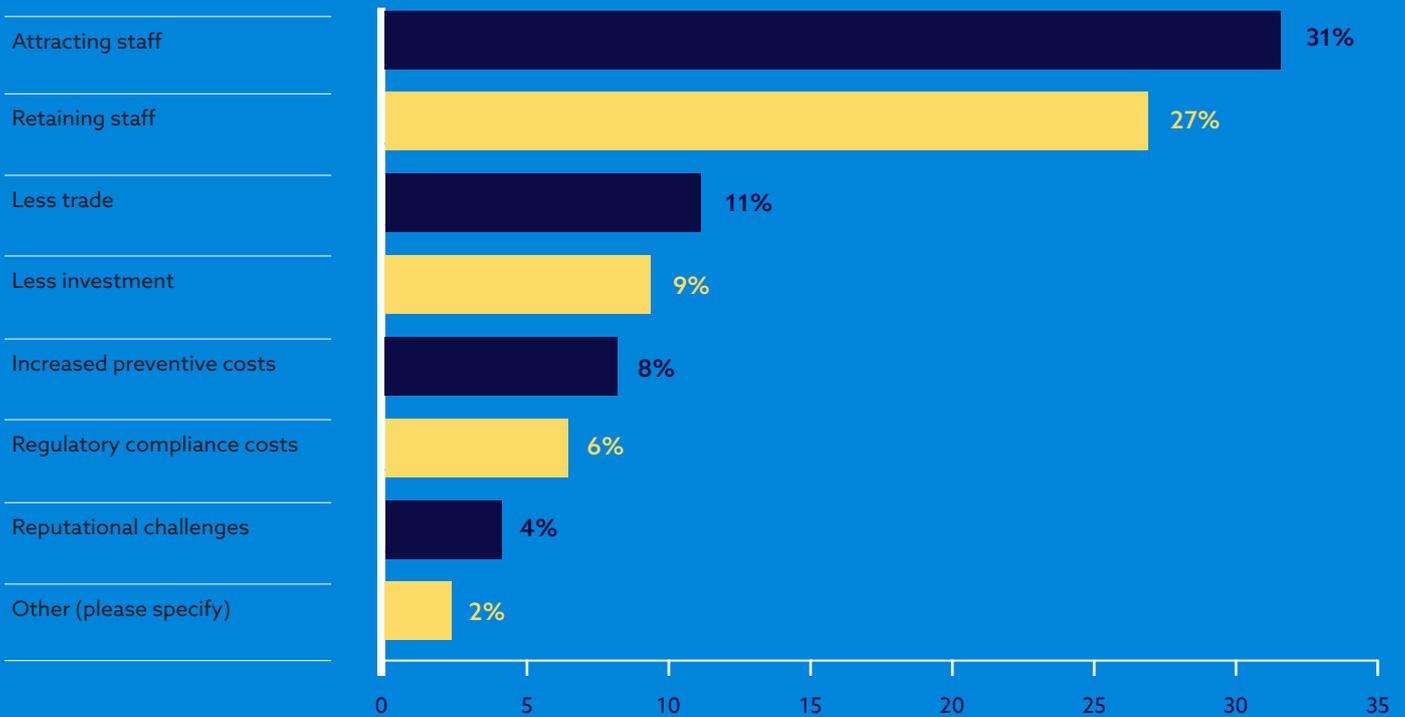
**What are the top challenges facing Dublin from a business perspective?  
A comparison; Q1 2023 vs. Q4 2023**



At the onset of 2023, less than one-in-ten Dublin businesses (7%) highlighted physical safety and security as a challenge facing Dublin. With over three-in-ten Dublin businesses (31%) placing safety among the top challenges facing Dublin in Q4 of this year, this has increased by 24 percentage points.

Housing, both the availability and cost, is the standout issue facing Dublin as a whole. This issue is the proximate cause for difficulties in staffing, which has been inferred through roundtable discussions held within the Chamber, and it is an issue detailed in the proceeding analysis.

### How are these issues affecting your business?

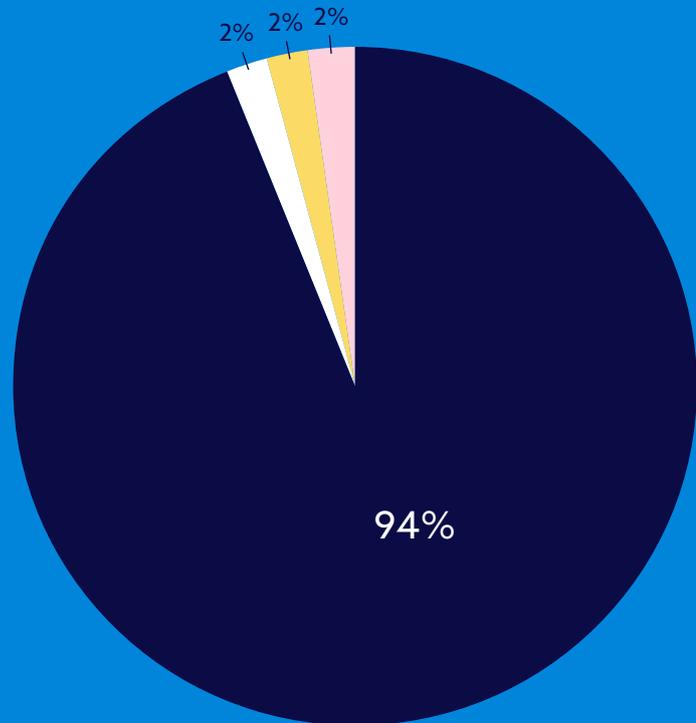


When considering the issues effecting Dublin from a business perspective the negative impacts are most apparent for staff concerns. When considering the issues facing Dublin in the previous question, almost one-in-three businesses (32%) reported that these problems are affecting their ability to attract staff. With over

one-in-four (27%) reporting problems in retaining staff due to the issues, three-in-five of businesses (59%) throughout the Dublin region state that issues within Dublin, ranging from affordable housing to poor infrastructure and skills and labour shortages, are causing problems regarding both the ability to attract and retain staff.

Given recent events, what are your opinions on the need for increased levels of Gardaí on the streets of Dublin? e.g. higher visibility, armed guards, dog units on standby etc.

- Yes, there is a need
- No, there is not a need
- No opinion on the matter
- Other (please specify)



Almost all Dublin businesses (95%) have indicated the need for higher visibility on the streets of Dublin, with a cohort of those who selected other suggesting a combination of actions which ultimately include higher visibility. This information must be accompanied by the caveat that this report was completed before the events that took place in Dublin in the last week of November 2023. Physical safety is a growing concern for Dublin businesses as indicated by the 24 percentage points increase in those selecting this concern at an earlier stage in the survey.

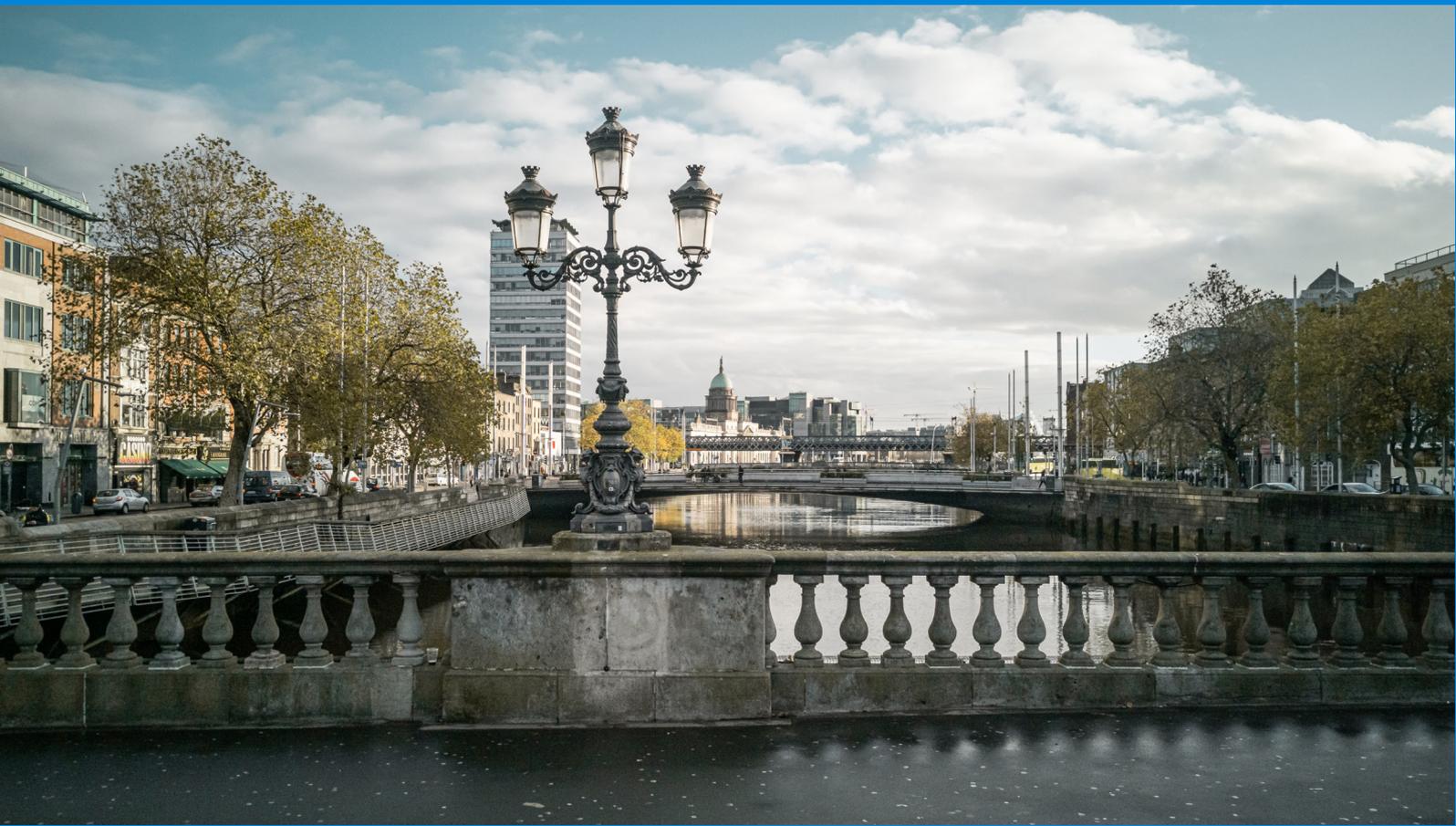
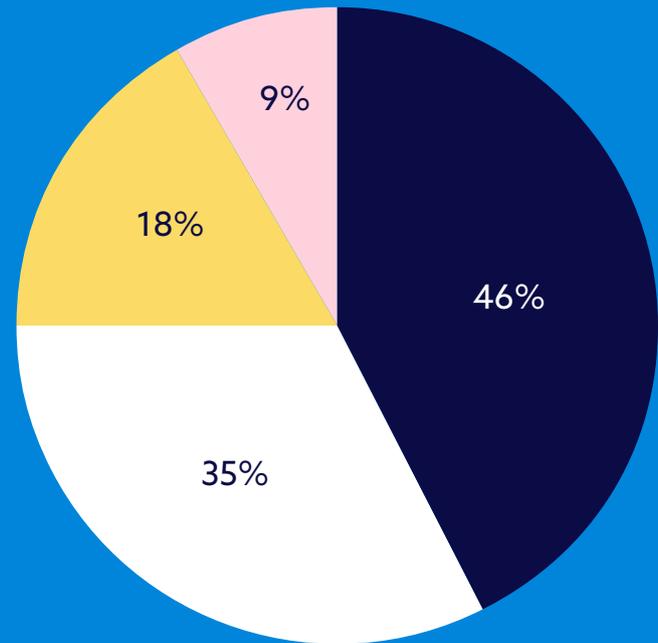
Dublin Chamber has consistently implemented advocacy campaigns for safety, as concern has grown among the Chamber's membership. This has included several high-profile meetings with senior Oireachtas members, Gardaí, and local authorities in the days after the events in which took place across the city centre. A full description of these actions can be found [here](#), and as always if there are any insights or views you may have on this matter, please do not hesitate to contact the public affairs team at [policy@dublinchamber.ie](mailto:policy@dublinchamber.ie).



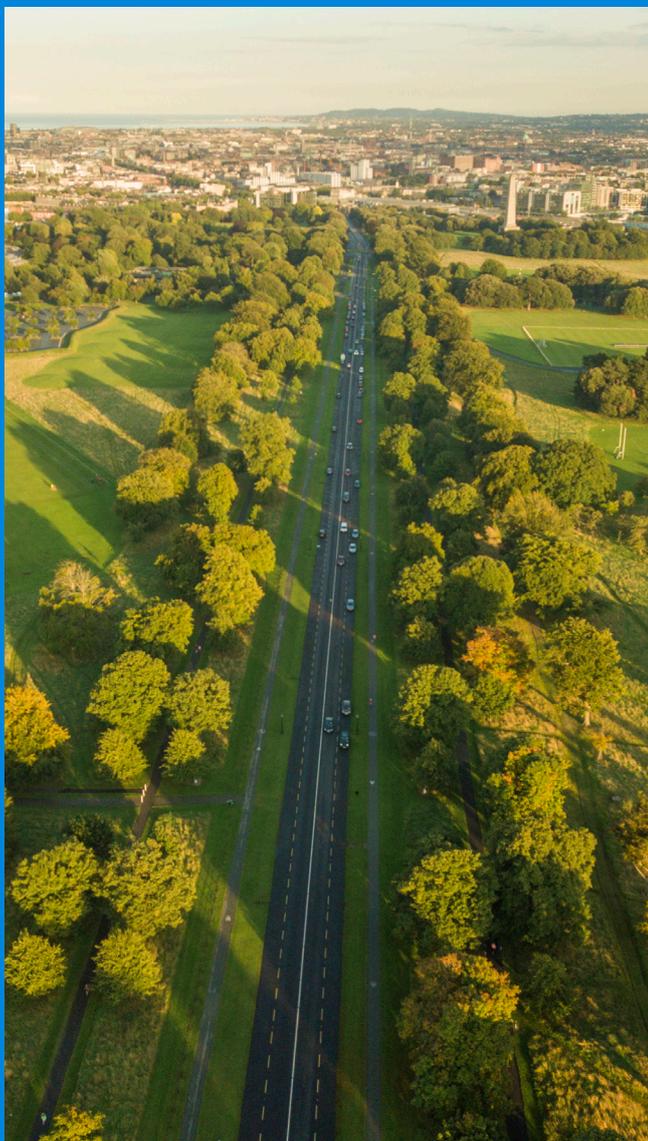
# Transport

There are plans to reduce private car use through Dublin City Centre by the introduction of Bus Gates on the quays, do you believe that this will be effective in creating a modal shift away from private cars?

- No
- Yes
- Not sure
- Other (please specify)



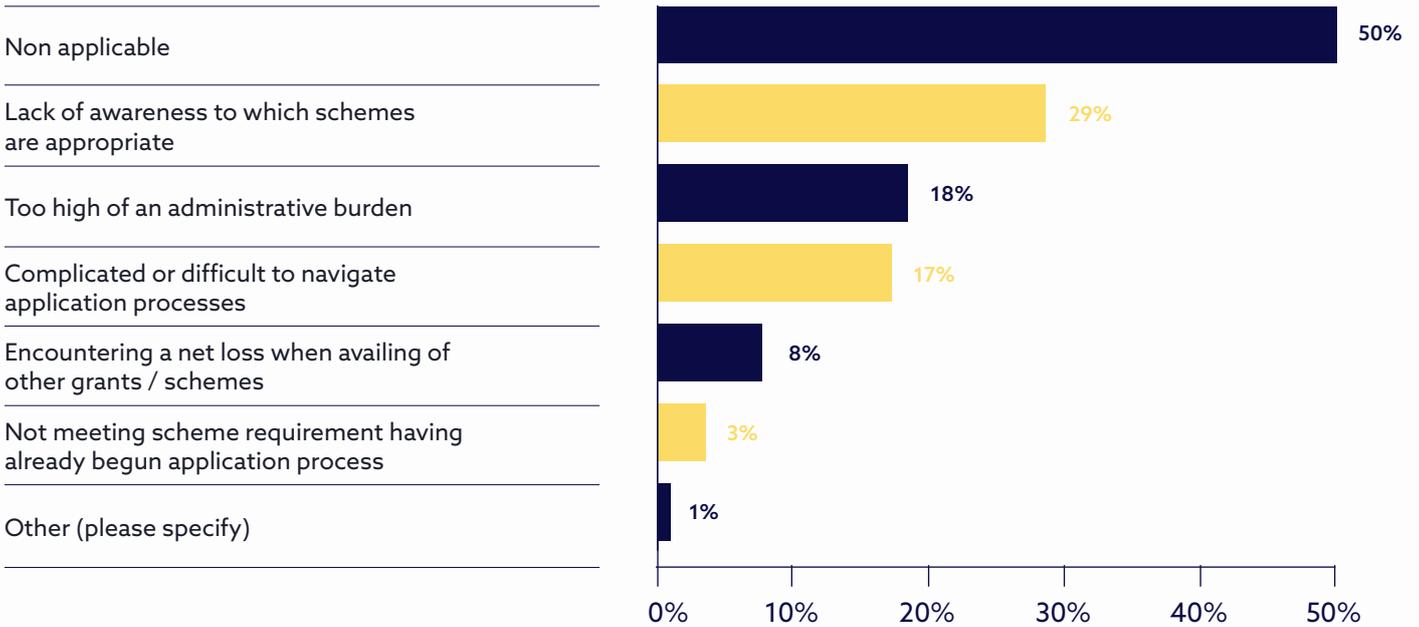
Almost one-in-two businesses (46%) believe that the creation of bus gates on the quays will be ineffective in providing an alternate mode of transportation, creating a modal shift away from private car usage. Over one-in-three (35%) expect a positive result with the implementation of bus gates. Uncertainty is evident as almost one-in-five (17%) cannot say whether these bus gates will be effective or not. One-in-ten businesses (10%) elected to pick other, instead providing some of the following anecdotal insights on the matter;



- "Transport infrastructure in the City is not sufficient to remove private cars from the Quays. This may well reduce car usage, but it will also reduce the number of people willing to come into the city."
- "It will be insufficient on its own. The frequency of the buses, as well as the connectivity and safety at all times will be important factors in addition to bus-friendly infrastructure."
- "I think it will be to the detriment of city centre traders. Ongoing works and reduced access is already deterring people from entering the city on public transport (which is unsafe at times) and push them to shopping at Centres on the M50 circumference."
- "It will just steer people to drive through other areas of the city and create congestion. The bus and public transport network are not efficient enough for this. They should focus on getting people using bikes and more efficient transport systems."
- "However, multimodal forms of transport must be utilised."
- "Yes, if good public transport infrastructure put in place - and inexpensive park and ride facilities."
- "There is totally inadequate public transport and at peak time's impossible to get a taxi, so this initiative is too early and assumes commuters and travellers have suitable alternatives to the car."
- "Need an extensive Luas network that actually joins up."
- "It is how people will get to the quays - there lies the issue."

# Legislation

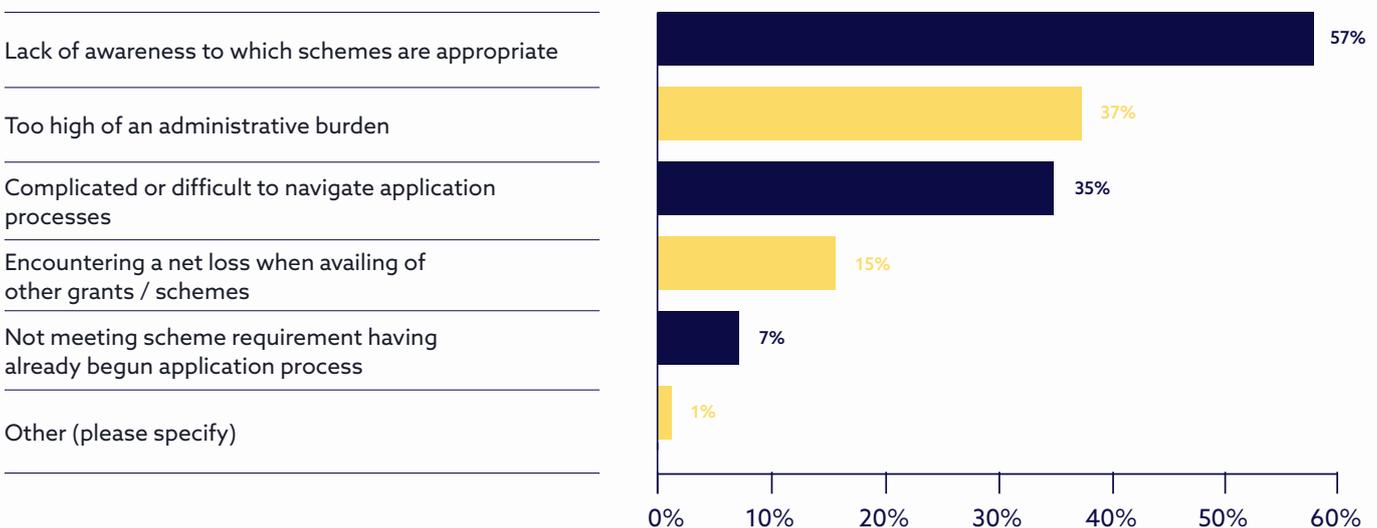
**If your company has used schemes used to reduce carbon emissions in the past, what has been the biggest issue in using them? [This may include Climate Toolkit 4 Business, Green for Business, SEAI grants, SBCI grants, SOLAS or any other scheme aimed towards reaching sustainability targets.]**



When asked on issues faced when interacting with Government schemes that attempt to reduce carbon emissions, one-in-two businesses

had some issue to report from lack of awareness to not meeting scheme requirements having already begun the application process.

**Of those who reported an issue with these schemes, the breakdown is as follows:**



When looking solely at those who have interacted with such schemes in the past, the lack of awareness is the largest issue experienced by Dublin businesses with almost three-in-five (57%), encountering this. Almost two-in-five businesses (37%) claim these schemes to have too high an administrative cost, while over one-in-three (35%) also claim these schemes to be too complicated or difficult when navigating the application processes.

It becomes obvious when looking at these figures that while the intention behind these schemes is commendable, there are evident issues in their execution and accessibility. Addressing these concerns, particularly around awareness, administrative costs, and procedural complexities, is crucial for wider and more effective adoption among firms striving towards more sustainable business practices.

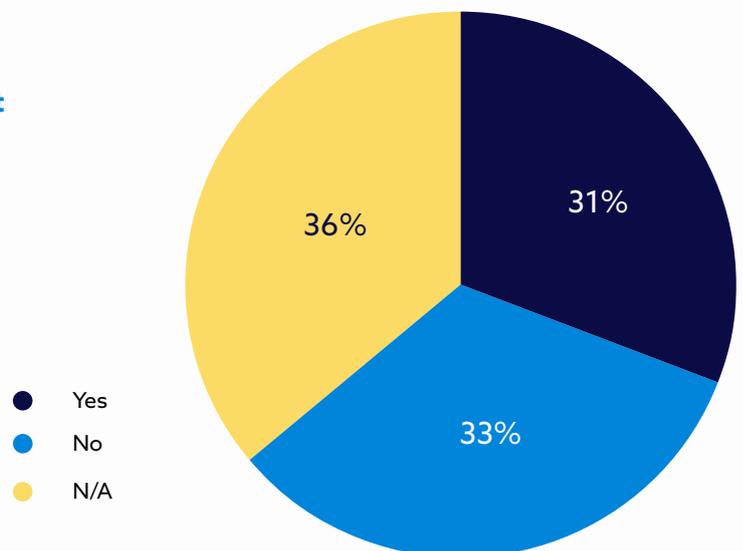
Within a Review of Migration Policy conducted by Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment in 2018, the need to resolve 'the inflexibilities' of the current employment permit system was noted, and the recently introduced Employment Permit Bill 2022 seeks to address this.

Amongst other actions, the bill intends to:

- Introduce a Seasonal Employment Permit
- Revise the burdensome labour market needs test
- Provide additional grounds for granting an employment permit

However, as it is currently only at the Committee Stage of the legislative process, there remains quite some time before the Bill may be executed, and not without the possibility of significant amendment. Within the context of Ireland's full employment, the current skills crisis and tight labour market, Dublin Chamber, in an attempt to better understand Ireland's employment permit landscape and its navigability for businesses, asked members for their input on the effectiveness of the current system. By a slim margin, a majority of Dublin businesses reported that the current system does not meet the needs of their business (33%) vs the one-in-three firms (31%) who said it does meet their needs. One-in-three (36%) said that this question was not applicable. Dublin Chamber recently made a submission to the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment further detailing the impact of the current system on businesses who are impacted by this, which can be read [here](#).

**The current skills shortage experienced due to the tight labour market is a recurring issue for Dublin businesses. Does the current employment permits system meet the needs of your business in seeking staff outside the EEA? (Critical Occupations List)**

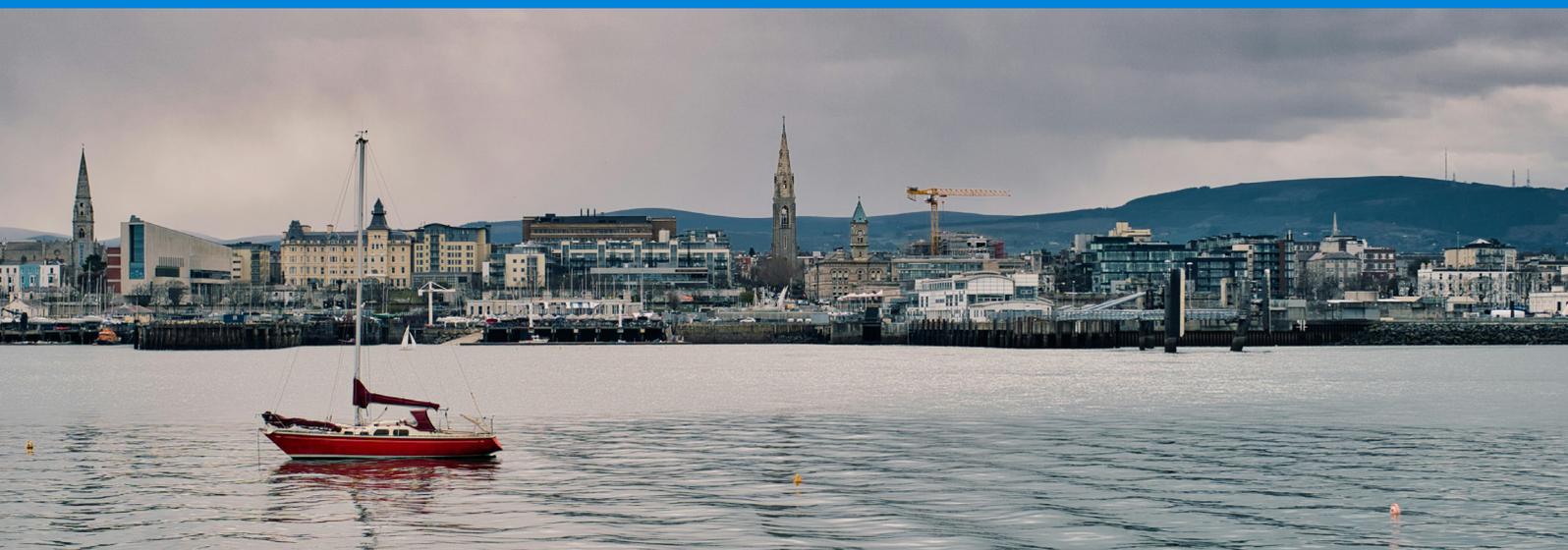
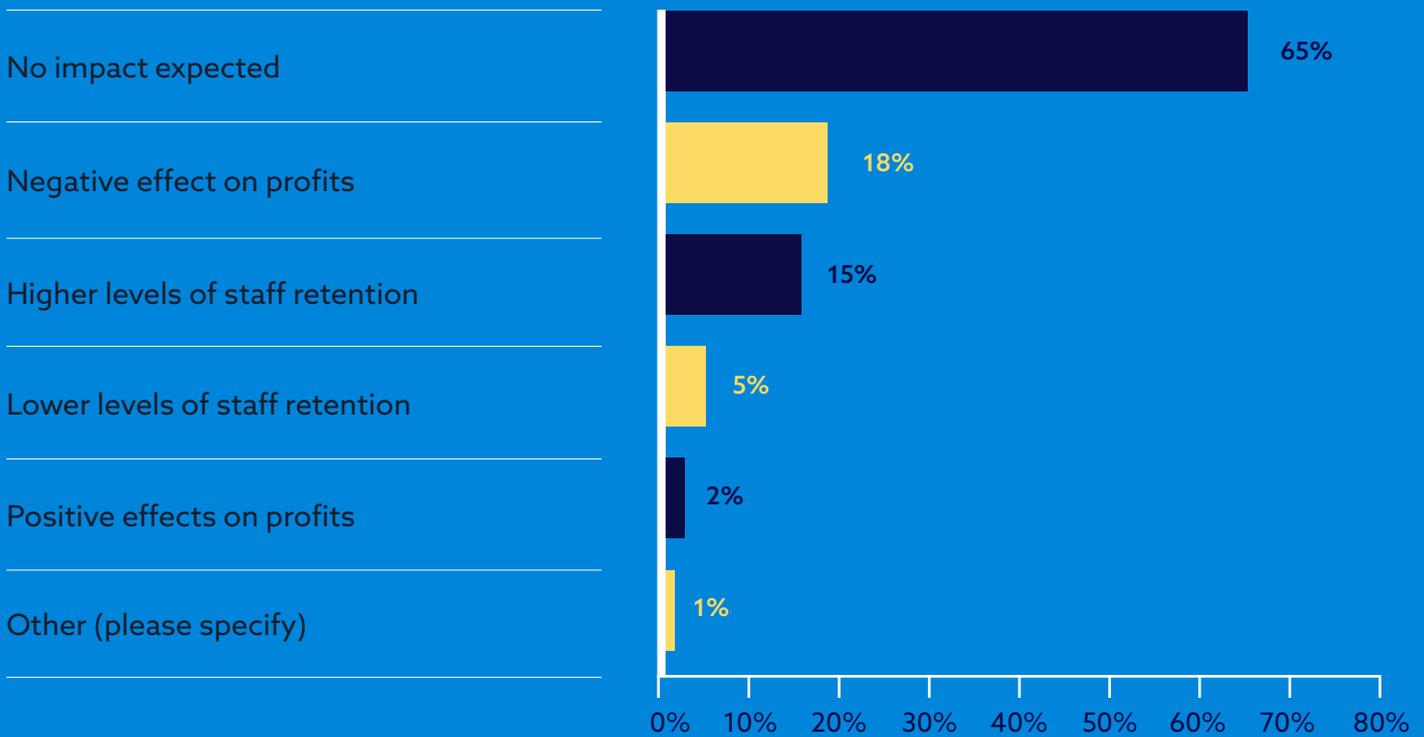


# Minimum Wage

While most survey respondents are expecting no impact as a result of the increase in minimum wage, with over two-in-three businesses (65%) stating such, the results regarding profits and staff retention are polarising. One-in-five businesses

(18%) answered the most probable outcome to be a negative effect on profits, with slightly more than fifteen percent claiming higher levels of staff retention.

**What would you expect to be the most probable outcome(s) for your business considering the increase of the minimum wage to €12.70 from 1 January 2024 outlined in the recent Budget?**



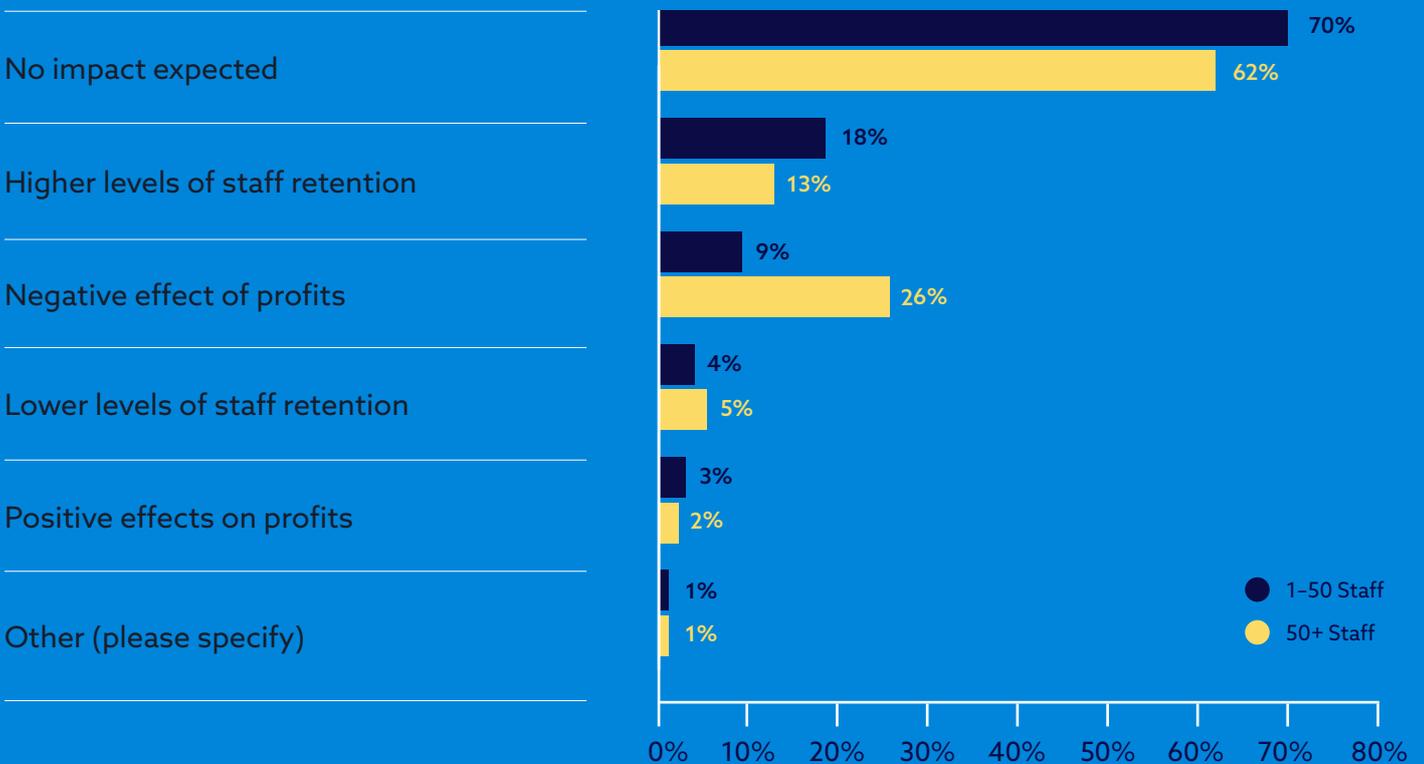
Larger companies, with greater than fifty staff, are more inclined to expect a decrease in profits resulting from an increase in the minimum wage, with over one-in-four (26%) expecting a decrease in profits subsequent to an increase in the minimum wage set to take place in January. Less than one-in-ten Dublin businesses employing less than fifty staff (9%), expect a negative effect on profits as a result to the increase in the minimum wage.

Additional differences between smaller and larger companies on the expected outcomes regarding changes to the minimum wage

concern the retention of staff. For larger companies, employing more than fifty staff, approximately one-in-eight (13%) indicated a positive effect on staff retention, whereas for smaller companies, almost two-in-five (18%) revealed a positive expectation towards the retention of staff given an increase in the minimum wage.

This five-percentage point difference in expected effect on staff retention, as well the significant difference in the expected effects on profits relative to the amount of people employed in each business can be seen below.

**What would you expect to be the most probable outcome(s) for your business considering the increase of the minimum wage to €12.70 from 1 January 2024 outlined in the recent Budget?**



# Business Outlook

The Dublin Chamber Expectations Index provides insight into the economic outlook of the Dublin businesses community. Analysing several metrics such as revenues, profits, costs, prices and staffing, it provides the opportunity to see how these statistics relate to the timeseries

which commenced up to three years ago. The Index is calculated by charting the difference between expected increases in a metric, versus any expected decrease. With all positive values constituting an expected increase across the board, while a negative figure signifies a decline.

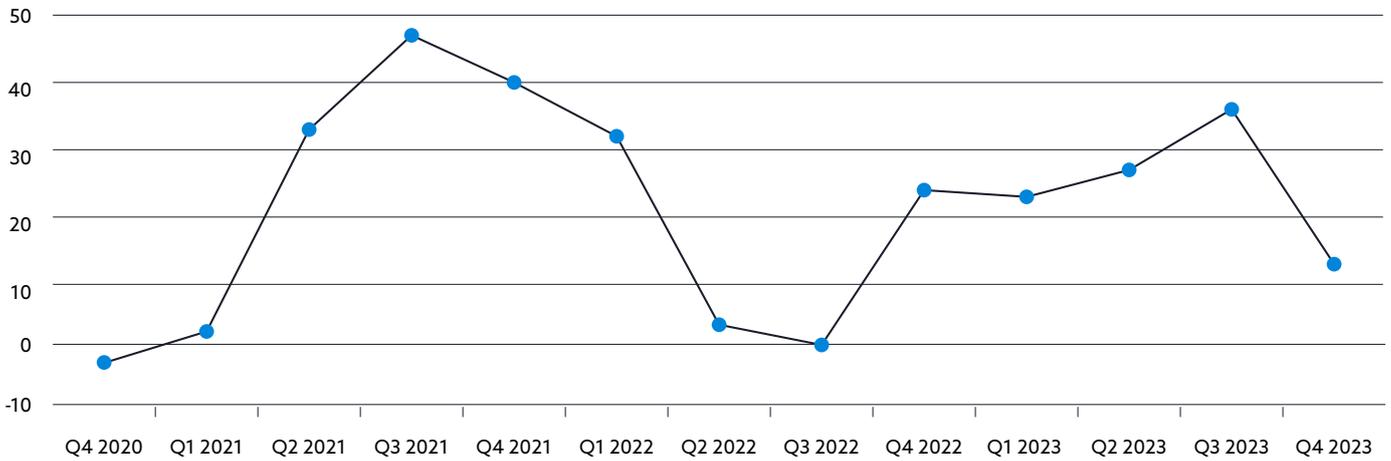
## Revenue Expectation Index



The Revenue Expectation Index currently sits at (+36), with over two-in-five Dublin businesses (43%) expected to increase revenue next quarter. It is a positive reflection of expected revenue compared to the earliest measures of the index at the end of 2020 and beginning of 2021. Despite this positive comparison over the long term, the graph illustrates that revenues are set to decrease to a level not seen since Q1 2021.



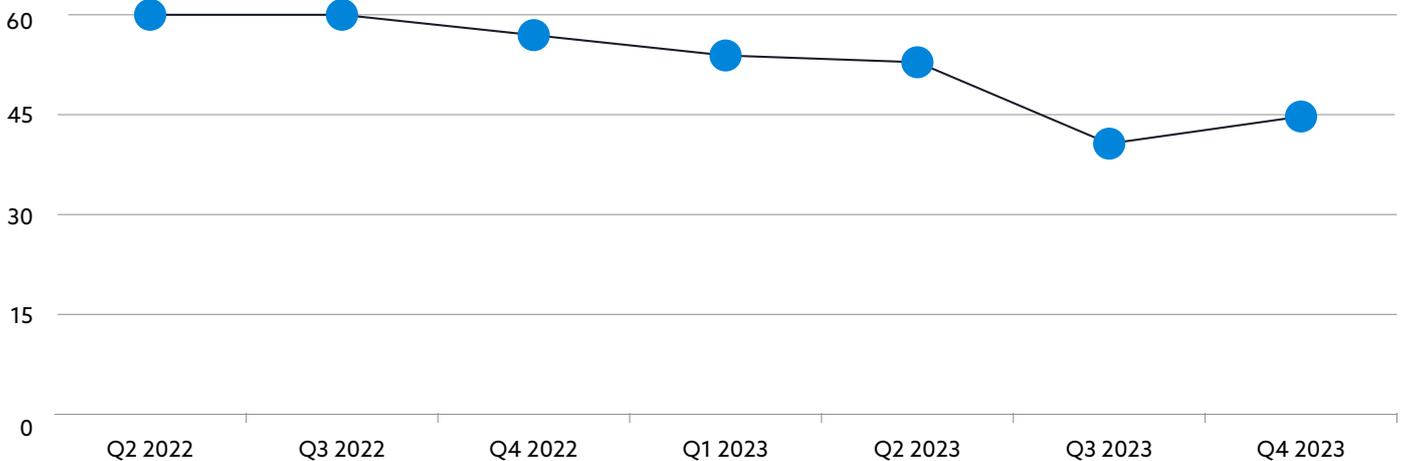
**Profit Expectation Index**



The Profit Expectation Index has seen a sharp decline in from what was an upward trending graph which started Q3 2022. There is a cyclical nature to this graph as no previous Q4 has produced an increase relative to its previous

quarter. When decreases are seen within the Revenues Expectation Index, these changes are exaggerated in the Profits Expectation Index, with decreases of eleven index points and twenty-three index points respectively.

**Price Expectation Index**



Recording Dublin Chamber members' expectations regarding any change in the price of their goods or services, can be viewed as a unique perspective of inflation across the Dublin region. The Price Expectation Index currently sits at (+45) with one-in-two businesses (50%) expecting an increase in the price of their goods. This marks

the first month in which the index has increased relative to the previous quarter, however, this quarter does represent the second lowest recording over the lifetime of the index - with a 5% of Dublin businesses expecting a decrease in the price of goods and services, the largest proportion of respondents to date.

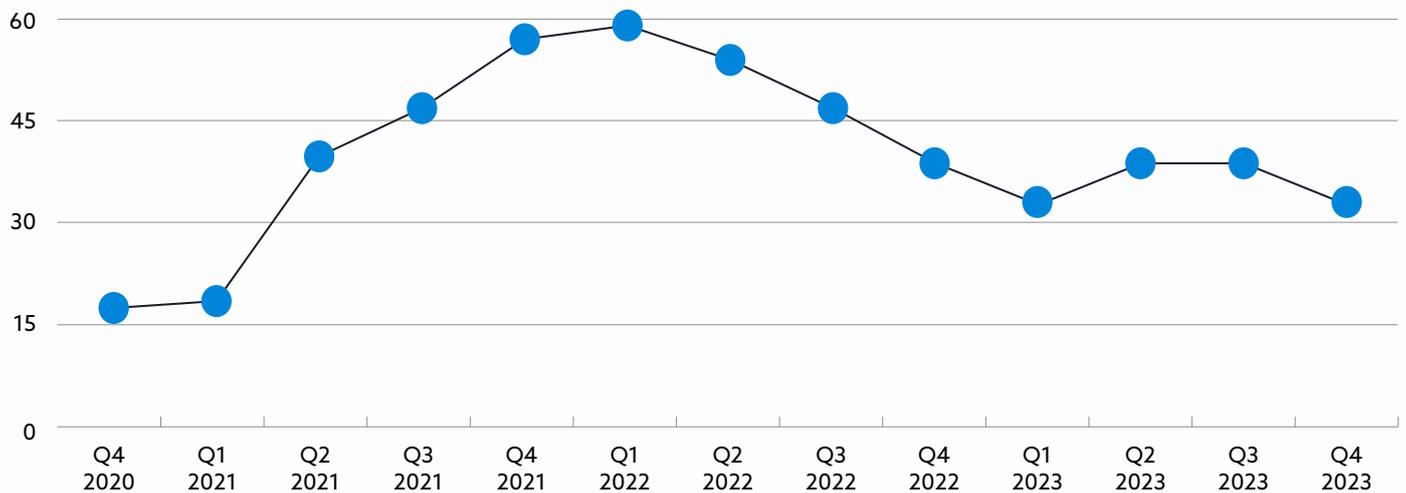
### Operating Costs Expectations Index



The Operating Costs Expectation Index is one that has seen large fluctuation in a short space of time with the index beginning in 2022. Currently standing at (+69) index points, the index has returned to the same value of Q2 2023, having hit a record low of (+58) last quarter.

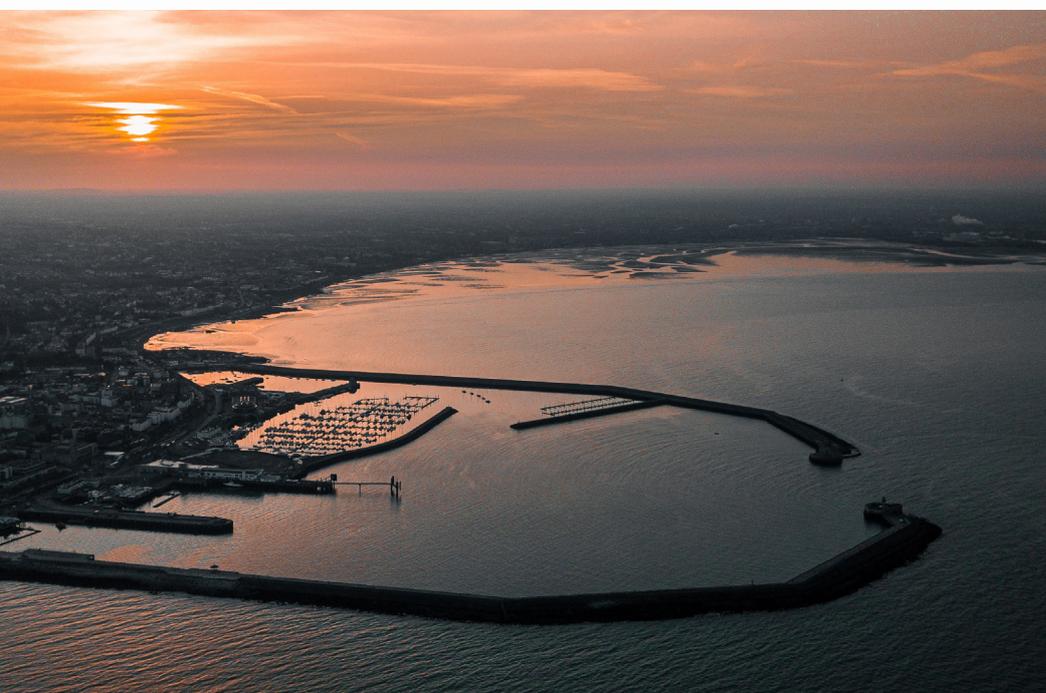


## Staff Expectation Index



Staffing concerns, from attraction, to retention and upskilling, are most definitely a top priority for Dublin businesses. The Staffing Expectation Index is a practical tool to see how the space is expected to change over the next quarter, into 2024. Currently standing at (+33), the index has remained within the 33-39 index points range over the course of the last twelve months.

Situating current trends in staffing in the middle of the index's extremes at (+18) at the index's starting point in Q4 2022, and (+59) recorded in Q1 2022. Over four-in-ten (43%) expect their company's staff numbers to increase, while one-in-ten (10%) expect their staff numbers to decrease.

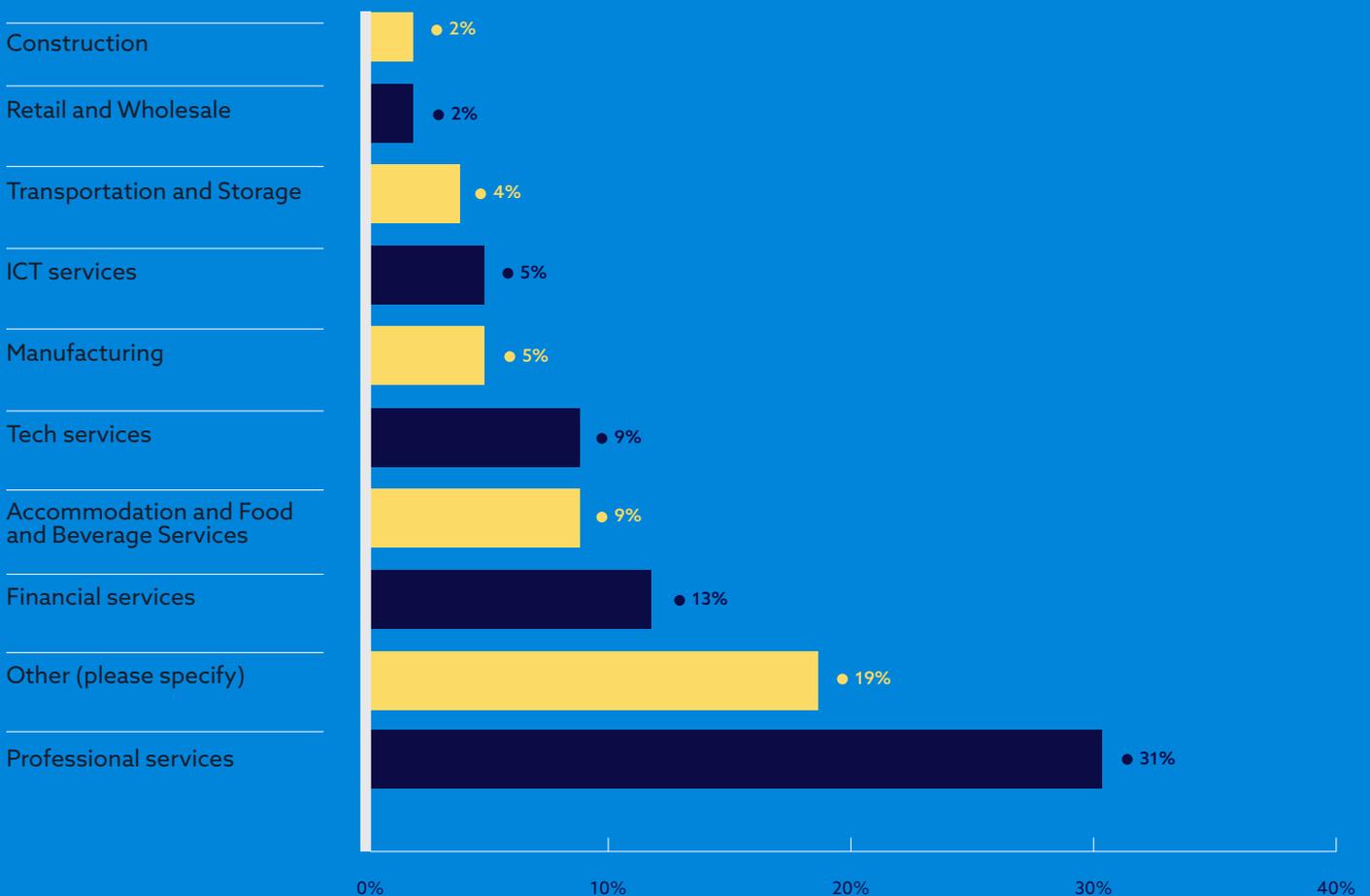


# Survey Respondents

Those who participated in the survey reflect the diverse nature of Dublin's business community that is Dublin Chamber members. The professional services industry accounted for almost one-in-three survey respondents

(31%), with the second highest group being financial services (13%) and third highest, accommodation and food and beverages (9%). Almost one-in-five (19%) chose 'other', falling into categories not titled within the graph.

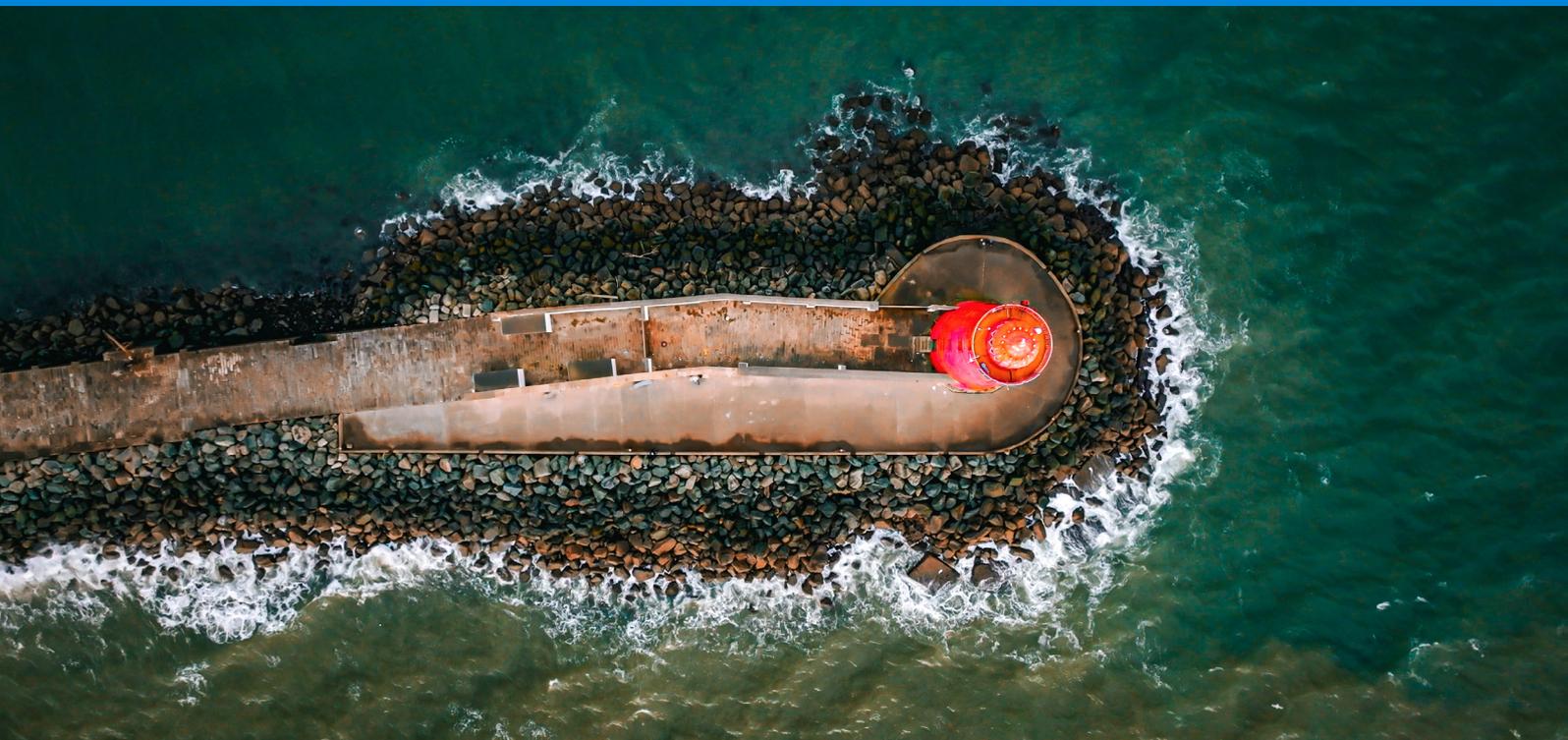
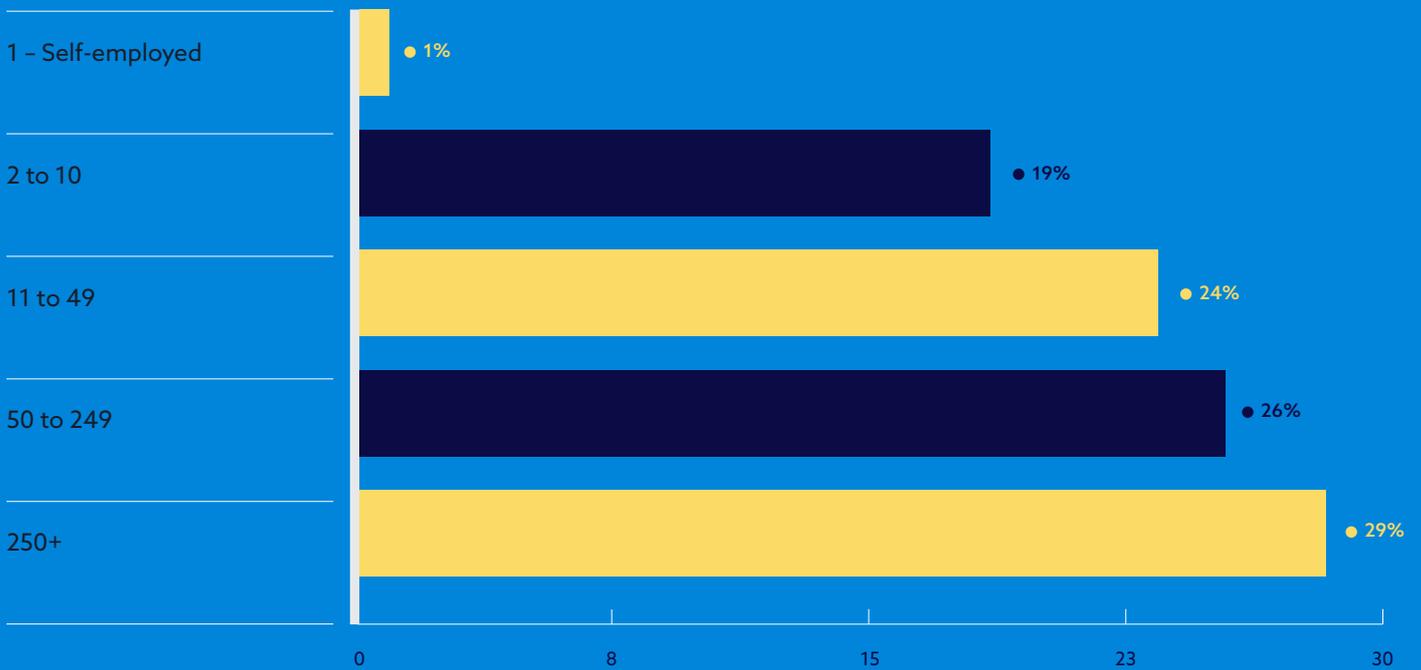
## What sector is your company primarily in?



The breakdown of member companies by how many staff they employ are as follows, representing those from 250+ to microbusinesses, and self-starters. The largest portion of survey respondents were from business with excess of 250 staff,

account for almost three-in-ten of survey respondents (29%). On the other hand, businesses with less than fifty staff were well represented, with 19% having registered between two and ten staff, and 24% stating staff numbers in the region of eleven and forty-nine.

### How many people does your company employ?



# Roundtable on Safety

Dublin Chamber's roundtable discussion held on safety came from a multitude of different sectors, with experiences with anti-social behaviour affecting those differently, yet the same concern was shared for the city of Dublin. Participants agreed more is needed to restore Dublin's reputation and make the city a more vibrant, safe, and friendly city. There was a consensus among the roundtable group that the feeling of menace started to really make itself aware at the end of COVID with the return to normality in a lot of aspects of life. However, anti-social behaviour seemed to rise.

The consequences of such ranged from assaults on staff members, increased preventative security costs, deals that fell through because of Dublin being unsafe. Hotel groups commented on millions of euros that has not been invested into the industry in Dublin when investors walk around the city. Members who deal with students coming from around the world had even more stark comments explaining that the situation is now, "By far the worst we've ever seen it." Assaults, spiked drinks, and thefts are common, impacting staff safety and business: "Dublin City...is just unsafe".

These are the reputations members are fearful that Dublin gets associated with if action isn't taken. The transport sector also explained the ramping up of vandalism heading into the winter. Collaborative thinking must be assured to assess the lack of

public transport at night, and indeed the lack of security that is currently on public transport, not including the Luas.

The participants expressed a need for more decisive action from the government and local authorities. Key asks included increased Garda presence on the streets, more effective handling of criminal offenses, especially involving repeat offenders, and improved public infrastructure, like street lighting and cleaning. There was a call for more systemic solutions, including addressing underlying social issues such as drug addiction and homelessness.

In terms of reaction, those who offered opinions in the discussion were frustrated regarding this sense of acceptance, exclaiming that Dublin needs to collectively take back the streets. Additionally, it was acknowledged that there was more to be done at a social level regarding alcoholism, drug addiction etc. – the root cause deemed by many. From government, this conversation explained the need for a decisive timeline while providing accountability, explaining it will only get worse if appropriate action isn't taken.

Overall, the discussion painted a picture of a business community deeply concerned about the safety levels in Dublin, calling for more effective government intervention, and a holistic approach to improving the city's safety and liveability.



# Roundtable on Legislative Changes

In this roundtable discussion, representatives from various sectors shared their perspectives on the impact of new legislation on their businesses. Key areas of legislation discussed were auto-enrolment in pension schemes, expansion of statutory sick pay entitlements, the right to request remote work, ongoing gender pay gap reporting, and increases in the national minimum wage.

Many participants anticipated that the continued roll out of gender pay gap reporting and the commencement of the right to request remote work next year would have significant impacts on their operations. While the ultimate legislative goals were commended, concerns were raised about the administrative and financial challenges of complying with these new requirements. The gender pay gap was particularly noted in sectors like construction, where there are more men than women. The ability to work remotely was seen as both an opportunity and a challenge, affecting employee engagement and informal learning opportunities.

With many businesses sceptical of achieving any proposal of 50/50 gender balance. Ultimately, this is cross sectorial with many firms acknowledging they have a long way to go when it comes to gender pay gap, accepting challenges involving capacity and bandwidth. The introduction of auto-enrolment in pension schemes was generally viewed positively, although concerns about the additional administrative burden and costs

were common. This was seen as a necessary step to ensure employees' future financial security, especially among younger workers who may not be as concerned about pensions.

The expansion of statutory sick pay entitlements was seen as beneficial for employee welfare but raised concerns about potential misuse and the increased administrative load on businesses. The increase in the national minimum wage was supported as necessary due to rising living costs, while again noting the potential challenges it posed particularly for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs).

Participants expressed a need for more government support and clearer guidelines to navigate these legislative changes effectively. Key asks included improved childcare and housing policies, more accessible and affordable public transport, and incentives to support recruitment in challenging sectors.

Overall, the discussion highlighted the complexities and diverse impacts of the new wave of legislation on businesses across different sectors. While recognising the benefits of these legislative changes for employees, companies emphasised the need for balance to manage the additional costs and administrative requirements effectively.



# Roundtable on BER Ratings and Retrofitting Challenges

In the roundtable discussion, participants from various industries shared their experiences and challenges in improving the energy efficiency of their buildings, motivated by both environmental and cost considerations.

Many firms had taken measures to enhance energy efficiency, such as upgrading to LED lighting, changing boilers, and implementing energy reduction measures. However, a common challenge was changing employee behaviour, like ensuring lights were turned off when not needed. Some participants were in the process of selling old, inefficient buildings and considering whether to buy new ones or lease, weighing the burden of managing energy efficiency against regulatory changes.

A significant barrier identified by many was the architectural limitations of their buildings, especially those in older or protected structures. These buildings often presented unique challenges, such as difficulties in retrofitting, dealing with asbestos, or implementing energy-efficient air conditioning systems. For those in leased buildings, navigating relationships with landlords and determining who should take the initiative in energy efficiency improvements was a recurring issue.

Participants also expressed the need for clearer government guidance and support. They suggested that a central knowledge hub, similar to the information systems used during the COVID-19 pandemic, could be beneficial. This hub would provide accessible and centralised information on energy efficiency, grants, and best practices. Additionally, the extension of government initiatives like those from the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI)

was seen as a potential aid to help businesses navigate the complex landscape of energy efficiency improvements.

Financial constraints were another major concern, especially for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in older buildings. These firms often lack the resources to invest in significant retrofitting projects or to keep up with the evolving sustainability measures and increasing energy costs. The complexity of the grant application process and a general lack of awareness of available financial support further compounded these challenges.

In summary, while there was a clear recognition of the importance of improving energy efficiency, firms faced numerous hurdles, including architectural limitations, financial constraints, lack of clear guidance, and challenges in changing employee behaviours and negotiating with landlords. Participants called for more government support, clearer information, and easier access to financial aid to help overcome these barriers.



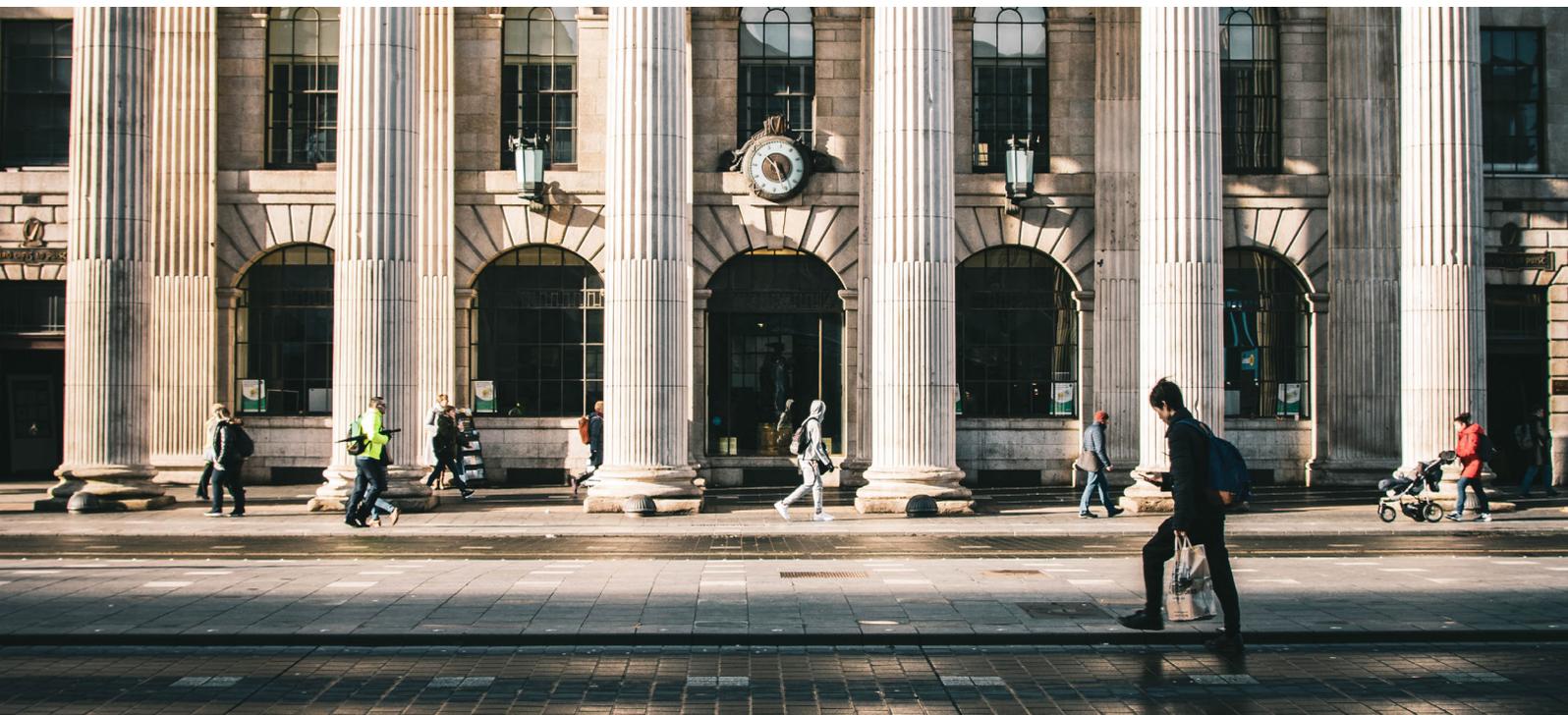
# Roundtable on Employment Permits

Roundtable discussion participants extensively discussed the inefficiencies and challenges in Ireland's employment permit and visa system, highlighting several key issues impacting the Dublin business community. Firstly, they noted the protracted six-month period required to revise job categories from ineligible to critical skills, arguing that the dynamic Irish labour market necessitates a much shorter timeframe. This delay was identified as a significant impediment for many companies.

Participants also criticised the disjointed processes between the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment (DETE) and the Department of Justice (DOJ). They pointed out the inefficient situation where entry clearance is required after obtaining a work permit, leading to an additional six-week wait and a duplication of the application process. This inefficiency, coupled with the two months needed to obtain a work permit, was described as highly problematic, with embassies duplicating the efforts of DOJ.

The labour market needs test was another focal point of criticism. Participants found the requirement of advertising in national newspapers for three days overly extensive and outdated, given the prevalent use of digital platforms like LinkedIn. They noted that this not only consumes time but also adds unnecessary costs, particularly for companies that lack in-house expertise in these processes and have to seek external help.

Regarding the permit review process, the participants pointed out that a six-week review period for denied applications is excessively long, especially considering that most are approved upon review. This was seen as highlighting inconsistencies in DETE's application processing. The issue of data retention was also raised, with concerns about a 30-day GDPR problem where prepared applications disappear from the system. This issue was underscored by the high volume of applications, particularly from Dublin, emphasising the need for the Dublin Chamber to engage with this issue.



The philosophical approach behind the proposed changes within the Employment Permits Bill 2022, expected to address some of these highlighted issues, was considered appropriate, but the timeframe for the execution of this bill, which may first face amendment, was seen as too long, rendering the expected benefits meaningless until finalised. There was a call for pressure to be put on the government to expedite the process of moving this bill forward.

Furthermore, participants from various sectors, including the arts, pharmaceuticals, energy, and legal firms, shared their experiences and perspectives. They discussed the practical difficulties in attracting international talent, the overly restrictive and outdated nature of

the labour market needs test, and the specific challenges faced in their respective industries due to the current permit system. The need for a more integrated and streamlined process between DETE and DOJ was repeatedly emphasised, with suggestions for the entire system to be redesigned to be more dynamic and responsive to the needs of businesses and the labour market.

Overall, the roundtable discussion underlined the urgency for a comprehensive overhaul of Ireland's employment permit and visa system to address these systemic issues, reduce bureaucratic delays, and better support the growth and competitiveness of the Dublin business community in the global market.



# Roundtable on Transport

This Dublin Chamber roundtable discussion involved various professionals from different sectors sharing their perspectives on a proposed urban development and transportation plan in Dublin.

The need for courage to reduce car dominance in Dublin's city centre was emphasised, drawing attention to the positive impact of pedestrianisation in other cities. Those who engaged in the discussion agreed that a bold approach to reshape the urban landscape brought about by effective public transport integration is necessary. While accepting challenges with public transport and local authorities, it is important to see the end goal and the positive impacts of most effective transport.

"It's really important to have that comparative feeling and taking cars out of the city centre. It's not something new. It's something that the cities we appreciate... have done that. So, we have to do it."

The idea is that successful models from other cities, where cars have been limited and public spaces enhanced, should be emulated. This comparative approach is something that has been documented in previous roundtable discussions calling for the utilisation of the river like Stockholm, or the implementation of bike route like Amsterdam.

Capacity concerns were also highlighted, with more action required to ensure easier trips in rush hours for staff and indeed students. Making these trips easier will have a lasting impact on how Dublin operates but also how it is perceived.

Effective public transport is required for all of Dublin. Businesses acknowledge that these services are needed for staff, but also to ease pressure on other roads, creating less traffic for deliveries, for emergency response etc. The future of public transport was also brought up in two lights. Firstly accepting that future public transport must be sustainable, but also for the need for more timelines and structure around projects implemented into the future.

Overall, the discussion reflected a diversity of perspectives on the proposed urban development and transportation plan, with participants expressing both support and concerns while emphasising the need for careful planning and execution. The immediate development of a transport plan is needed to instil a real sense of integrated transport across Dublin and into its hinterland.





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