

LCQ14: Manpower situation of the construction industry

Following is a question by the Hon Ho Kai-ming and a written reply by the Secretary for Development, Mr Michael Wong, in the Legislative Council today (April 3):

Question:

In 2014, the Construction Industry Council formulated a labour-supply list on 26 trades in the construction industry. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) whether it knows (i) the mode of employment of workers (i.e. being employed or self-employed), (ii) the method for calculating the wages, and (iii) the number of hours worked per week by each worker on average, in respect of each of the 26 trades at present, and set out such information in Table 1;

Table 1

Trade	(i)	(ii)	(iii)
1. Bar bender and fixer			
2. Carpenter (Formwork)			
...			
25. Trackworker			
26. Shotfirer			

(2) whether it knows (i) the number of people employed, (ii) the number of job seekers, (iii) the number of job vacancies, (iv) the job vacancy rate, (v) the number of industrial accidents, and (vi) the respective numbers of workers the importation for whom was applied and approved, in respect of each of the 26 trades in each of the past five years, and set out such figures using tables of the same format as Table 2:

Table 2 Year: _____

Trade	(i)	(ii)	(iii)	(iv)	(v)	(vi)
1. Bar bender and fixer						
2. Carpenter (Formwork)						
...						
25. Trackworker						
26. Shotfirer						

(3) whether it knows the total number of training courses provided by the Vocational Training Council and the Construction Industry Council (including

the training bodies under them) for the 26 trades in the past five years, as well as (i) the name, (ii) the years in which the course was offered, (iii) the number of training places, (iv) the entry requirements, (v) the duration of training, and (vi) the employment rate of graduated trainees, in respect of each of the training courses; set out such information by trade and training body using tables of the same format as Table 3; and

Table 3 Trade: _____

Training body	(i)	(ii)	(iii)	(iv)	(v)	(vi)

(4) whether the authorities have formulated new measures to attract local workers to join the construction industry to work in the 26 trades, and to reduce the manpower wastage in those trades; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

The reply to the Hon Ho Kai-ming's four-part question is as follows:

(1) Sub-contracting is a common practice in the construction industry, in which skilled workers can either be employees or self-employed persons. The methods of wage calculation are market-driven, mainly in terms of daily wages, monthly wages or piece rates. We do not have information on the modes of employment and methods of wage calculation for individual trades.

Based on the telephone survey on construction workers commissioned by the Construction Industry Council (CIC) during June to September 2018, the average number of working days per week for the 26 trades is as follows:

Trade	Average number of working days per week
1. Bar Bender and Fixer	4.3 days
2. Carpenter	4.1 days
3. Concretor	3.8 days
4. Rigger / Metal Formwork Erector	5.2 days
5. General Welder	5.1 days
6. Leveller	5.5 days
7. Plasterer	5.1 days
8. Bricklayer	4.7 days
9. Metal Scaffolder	5.4 days

10. Metal Worker	5.1 days
11. Structural Steel Welder	Not available
12. Painter and Decorator	5.0 days
13. Curtain Wall Installer	Not available
14. Structural Steel Erector	Not available
15. Escalator Mechanic	6.0 days
16. Lift Mechanic	5.9 days
17. Plumber	5.2 days
18. Fire Service Mechanical Fitter	Not available
19. Fire Service Electrical Fitter	Not available
20. Refrigeration / Air-conditioning / Ventilation Mechanic (Air System)	5.3 days
21. Refrigeration / Air-conditioning / Ventilation Mechanic (Water System)	5.3 days
22. Tunnel Worker	Not available
23. Compressed Air Worker	Not available
24. Plant and Equipment Operator (Tunnelling) – Tunnel Boring Machine	Not available
25. Trackworker	Not available
26. Shotfirer	Not available

Given the physically demanding nature of construction activities, construction workers working more than four days a week are considered to be fully engaged.

(2) The Government does not have the statistical breakdown by numbers of people employed, job seekers, job vacancies, job vacancy rate and industrial accidents for the 26 specified trades. Based on the information from the Census and Statistics Department and the Labour Department, the numbers of people employed, job vacancy rate (manual workers at construction sites) and industrial accidents for the entire construction industry in the past five years are as follows:

	Employed person in construction industry	Average vacancy rate of manual workers at construction sites (%)	Total number of industrial accidents in construction industry
2014	309 700	1.6	3 467
2015	316 700	0.8	3 723
2016	328 400	1.7	3 720
2017	342 000	1.9	3 902

2018	Not available	1.6	2 703 (First three quarters in 2018)
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â€‹The numbers of imported worker applied and approved for the 26 trades in the past five years are set out at Annex 1.

(3) Information on training courses offered by the CIC and the Vocational Training Council involving the 26 trades with manpower shortage is set out at Annex 2.

(4) With a view to attracting more new entrants to the construction industry, particularly youngsters, and keep in-service workers in the industry, we have implemented various measures in collaboration with the CIC and stakeholders in recent years:

(i) Offering well-structured programmes by the Hong Kong Institute of Construction (HKIC): The HKIC, established by the CIC, offers programmes recognised under the Qualification Framework with clear career development paths, which help encourage youngsters to join the industry.

(ii) Expanding the construction industry apprenticeship programme: In the 2019-20 Budget, we have proposed to allocate \$200 million to extend CIC's construction industry apprenticeship programme to more manpower shortage trades, increase the training allowance for new trainees pursuing the one-year full-time training programmes to encourage youngsters to join the construction industry, and encourage in-service workers to upgrade their skill level and continue to develop in the industry.

(iii) Introducing the construction industry through the STEM Alliance: To generate interest in the construction industry, the HKIC has put in place a STEM Alliance scheme to foster understanding and appreciation of the construction industry among students and teachers, thus attracting new entrants to the industry.

(iv) Promoting a positive image for the construction industry: We have been working with the CIC to promote the industry's image through TV and radio announcements in the public interest, hoardings at construction sites, the Construction Industry Sports and Volunteering Programme and other publicity initiatives in order to attract new entrants.

(v) Encouraging adoption of innovative construction technologies: With effect from January 2018, Government's capital works projects exceeding \$30 million are required to use Building Information Modelling technology from design to implementation. With a view to upgrading the industry through innovation and technology, we, together with the CIC, launched the \$1 billion Construction Innovation and Technology Fund in October 2018 to enhance productivity, build quality, site safety and environmental performance. A technology-based construction industry would be more appealing to youngsters.

(vi) Assisting trainees to settle in their working environment: To retain trainees in the industry, the CIC helps them settle in their working environment through continuous counselling, regular sharing programmes and follow-up visits to the trainees and their employers.

(vii) Setting out clear career paths: The CIC offers training courses at different levels that dovetail with each other. After acquiring practical experience, trainees can upgrade themselves to become skilled workers or take higher-level supervisory or managerial courses. Better career prospects help retain workers and empower them to advance in the industry.