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2021 REVIEW & 2022 TREND FORECAST

Job Opportunities Abound

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Dublin, Limerick, Galway, Cork
Kilkenny, Kerry, Tipperary, Offaly, Cavan

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Introduction

After the difficulties experienced in 2020 when the broader economy applied the handbrake on recruitment as they grappled with the implications of the pandemic, many may have expected a similarly conservative approach to have been adopted in 2021.

However, buoyed by the return of optimism, a confident outlook towards business growth and the hope provided by the vaccine rollout, this was a much different year. Confidence returning also meant there was time for businesses and organisations to reflect on their head count with needs that had been mothballed in 2020 now coming front and centre for many businesses.

More employees too were on the move, having decided that it was time for a change as the country began emerging from lockdown. This created further openings and further needs for many companies and organisations.

The result was a major increase in demand for new, qualified personnel, driving a significant rise in the level of recruitment experienced in the Republic of Ireland in 2021. *FRS Recruitment* experienced strong growth in the number of jobs handled. What was also fascinating is that broadly these were across almost all sectors and industries. Practically everyone was hiring and in a lot of cases, the employers needed new personnel yesterday!

As you will see in the various individual sections outlined in this report, there was growth in commercial, construction, healthcare, technical engineering and life sciences as well as across the temporary industrial and commercial positions. Of all the sectors, probably the largest jump experienced was in IT with demand coming in across the board for suitable personnel.

A further analysis of some of the key sub sectors is also included in this report in the next section, showcasing that almost universal growth.

This increase in activity is also seen in the volume of postings handled by *FRS Recruitment* in 2021. In total we advertised for 81,528 roles, which was up by 12% on the numbers for the previous 12 months in 2020. We also received vast interest in these positions, receiving 134,941 responses over the course of the calendar year.

On a regional basis there was also very good news with the vast majority of counties experiencing strong increases in the number of jobs. Across the Republic of Ireland, 20 out of the 26 counties recorded a rise in the number of roles, reflecting that the upbeat outlook wasn't limited to more urban areas. Details on the county-by-county performance is provided in our *Regional Impact* section.

Looking ahead to 2022, *FRS Recruitment* and our various sectoral teams all expect to see demand continue to grow next year – although the rise may not be at as quite a high level as experienced over the last 12 months. This is to be expected given how high a jump there was across recruitment in 2021. Most of the specific sectors will see further growth with little expectation that demand won't surpass current levels.

In certain industries and sub sectors that will have implications for salary levels as the competition to attract and retain qualified personnel becomes even greater. In those areas where it has become a candidate's market, we anticipate strong pressure to be placed on basic salaries, benefits and other package options, work/ life balance and the ways of working. For many roles, especially those which would have been traditionally office based, there will be a major demand for hybrid in keeping with the growth of remote working experienced over the course of the pandemic. Employees got a taste for that approach and many will expect to see that become part of their 'new normal' working conditions going forward.

Although the outlook for the coming year is very positive, it should be noted that there are still some uncertainties on the market. At the time of writing, concern around the Omicron variant is rising with new restrictions ever changing and speculation about more arising. There is also the question of what might happen certain sectors when the pandemic supports conclude and whether that might generate ripple effects across the broader economy.

Despite those questions we are still confident that recruitment will rise in almost all sectors over the next 12 months and we are forecasting a 10% jump in the number of roles in 2022.



Regional Impact

Although there has been a strong increase in the general number of roles in 2021, which translated into growth in most sectors and sub sectors, there was also a significant level of regional variations last year.

In the 26 counties in the Republic of Ireland, 20 of them experienced growth in the number of jobs available. This even included some counties who experienced more than double the number of roles that had been available in 2020, such as Carlow and Longford, although admittedly they had been coming from a low base. There was also really significant growth experienced in Cork, Dublin, Kildare, Kilkenny, Louth, Mayo, Meath, Offaly, Westmeath and Wexford.

Despite the rising tide that was experienced in recruitment in 2021, unfortunately not all counties were lifted. Six actually recorded a decline the total number of roles. The steepest drop was in Roscommon, followed by Donegal. The following table shows the level of change experienced in each of the 26 counties during 2021 in comparison to the previous year.



Carlow	117%
Cavan	17%
Clare	12%
Cork	60%
Donegal	-30%
Dublin	39%
Galway	11%
Kerry	9%
Kildare	53%
Kilkenny	79%
Laois	29%
Leitrim	-25%
Limerick	-5%
Longford	158%
Louth	72%
Mayo	62%
Meath	76%
Monaghan	34%
Offaly	30%
Roscommon	-45%
Sligo	-1%
Tipperary	11%
Waterford	-7%
Westmeath	47%
Wexford	66%
Wicklow	17%

A long-exposure photograph of a modern cable-stayed bridge at night. The bridge's white, curved pylon and its network of stay cables are prominent. In the background, a city skyline is visible with various buildings, some of which are lit up. A construction crane is also visible in the upper right. The bridge and city lights are reflected in the water in the foreground, which shows some motion blur. The word "OPPORTUNITIES" is overlaid in a bold, yellow, sans-serif font across the middle of the image.

OPPORTUNITIES

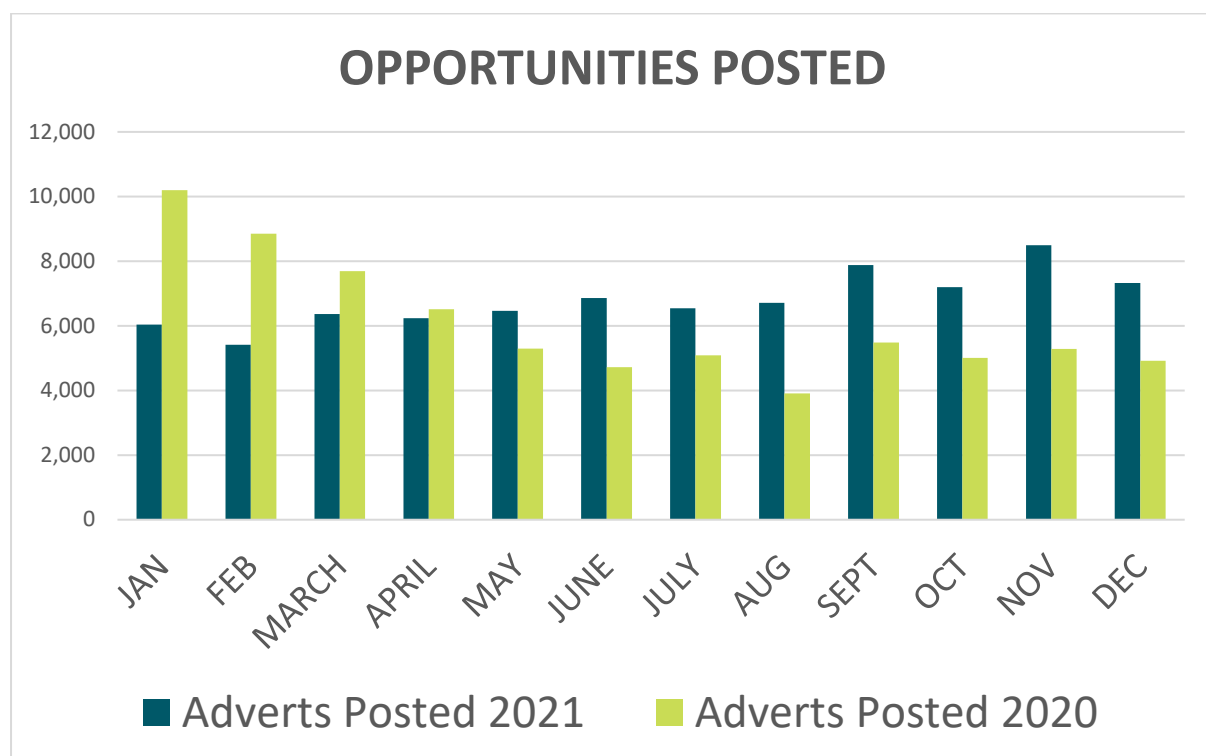
Opportunities

The last 12 months saw a marked increase in the number of opportunities coming on the market. In total FRS Recruitment advertised a total of **81,528** roles in 2021, which was up by 12% on the 72,939 positions posted in 2020.

While this was a significant jump on the level of activity encountered the year before, as the graph below demonstrates there were variations over the course of the year. For the first 4 months of 2021, basically when the country was still predominately in lockdown, the number of roles advertised tracked below the 2020 comparison figures.

However, once the lockdown ended for most sectors of the economy and there was greater certainty throughout the general business environment, the number of postings began to grow and the level of increase on the month-to-month comparison grew wider as the year progressed, resulting in a significant rise in jobs posted year on year.

FRS Recruitment also received a significant level of interest in these opportunities, generating 134,941 response applications in 2021.



Industry Sector Opportunities

With 2021 having seen a very strong increase in the total number of vacancies available, it was interesting to take a look at how some of the various sectors and sub sectors performed.

What was immediately apparent was that the vast majority of sectors or sub sectors were up. On a macro level this is understandable when you consider that 2020 was a greater year of uncertainty as businesses and other organisations adopted a much more conservative approach in light of the breakout of the pandemic, with 2021 representing something of a reaction to that approach.

While the below list is just a snapshot of some of the sectors and sub-sectors we cover, it is notable that the only sub sector listed below which carried a decrease was education and training.

Every other category listed below experienced an increase. Admittedly some of these were coming from a very low base, such as hotels and hospitality. Yet it is still remarkable that for a sector which was one of the last to recover and which experienced further restrictions in the run up to Christmas, the number of vacancies still doubled in 2021.

Other increases of note were in retail where the jobs available increased by 117% over the last 12 months. Supply chain, transport and logistic roles were up by 82% in line with the major growth in activity across this area. Perhaps it should come as no surprise that there was a further strong increase in healthcare, although it was primarily on the private side with the number of roles growing by 74%.



However, the widespread nature of the broad growth is perhaps best reflected in the significant rises in professional service as well as banking and financial roles. Those would have been less directly affected by the pandemic than some other sectors with changes in recruitment being influenced more by business outlook than restrictions. As such the jump in these sub sectors was a good guide to the broader recruitment mindset, we experienced across the Irish economy in 2021.

The below table provides a further snapshot of some of the interesting sectoral and sub-sectoral changes.

Sector	Percentage Change
Agriculture	25%
Banking & Financial Services	58%
Construction – Building	18%
Construction – Engineering and Energy	30%
Education and Training	-35%
Healthcare – Private Sector	74%
Healthcare – Public Sector	6%
Hotel & Hospitality	110%
IT – Support Services	14%
IT – Software Development	5%
Manufacturing – Food	16%
Manufacturing – Misc.	14%
Pharmacy – Retail	69%
Professional Services and Practices	68%
Public Sector – Services	55%
Retail	117%
Supply Chain, Transport & Logistics	82%
Utilities – Renewable Energy	19%

Healthcare

This year was meant to be the one where the rollout of the vaccines allowed for the eventual normalisation of society and took the pressure off the health service. Unfortunately, it didn't quite work out that way.

From a healthcare recruitment perspective, there has been strong demand for candidates in most areas across healthcare. In roles such as social care and healthcare assistants, demand significantly surpassed supply of candidates. In nursing, there was a particularly strong demand for NMBI pinned nurses, with a strong preference in the private hospitals for experienced and specialist trained nurses. There was also a good uptake in community nursing, but a shift away from nursing home roles. Triage nurses were another role where there was an increased level of need.

There was also an extensive need for allied health professionals, with the market for radiographers and sonographers in permanent roles in public and private settings being especially apparent. Other areas of allied health were also in demand on the locum side with panelling and recruitment drives taking place across the HSE.

There was also a noticeable interest in counselling and psychotherapy roles.

For doctors the situation wasn't quite as clear cut. There was a slow start in the January rotation, but this bounced back in July, with a strong demand. The lack of movement in the domestic market when it came to doctors no doubt influenced that, with a lot of the roles that came in only being available to foreign based doctors.

In terms of numbers, we estimate that the level of recruitment in 2021 compared to the previous year was approximately:

Nursing	Doctors	Allied Healthcare/Social Care
Up 10%	Down 5%	Up 10%

What to expect from Healthcare in 2022?

FRS Recruitment expects there will be competition for staff across healthcare over the next 12 months. This will be really apparent in areas where there are a high number of private providers in the market. Those businesses will be looking to ensure sufficient levels of cover and that will impact the market, including entry level roles.

Takeovers by corporates of smaller nursing homes will also see a strong level of nursing demand. We are also expecting to see more primary care and social care roles come on stream. The market for doctors should also become more fluid with (hopefully) restrictions changing – but the level of increase in opportunities is still likely to be relatively limited.

There will also be more opportunities for candidates coming from outside Ireland, with many healthcare providers needing to enhance their pipeline of suitable candidates.

Overall, we expect to see the total number of **Healthcare roles grow by 10% in 2022.**

Manufacturing and Engineering

When you are in the midst of a pandemic and uncertainty rages across a variety of industries, it can be very helpful indeed to be working in a sector deemed critical. That has been the case for the Technical Engineering and Life Science sector over the last couple of years, with major parts of this industry directly or indirectly involved in medical devices or pharmaceuticals.

2021 was a buoyant year for this sector, with many of the sub sectors experiencing skills shortages, driving a surge in recruitment needs. To put that in context *FRS Recruitment* estimate that the total number of job postings handled over the last 12 months was up by approximately 40%.

More or less across the entire sector there was a strong increase in job vacancies, which was coupled with a jump in the number of companies requiring assistance in filling graduate roles.

There was growth in the number of temporary roles provided especially in commercial and industrial.

This surge in demand also helped improve conditions for qualified candidates, boosting salaries and the packages provided as companies competed to attract the best employees.

What to expect from Manufacturing and Engineering in 2022?

FRS Recruitment expects the extensive growth trend we have seen in 2021, to carry on well into 2022. The employers we are talking to on a daily basis are all sending the one message – *they are expecting to hire more staff over the next 12 months.*

This ongoing need will have further ramifications for qualified candidates, especially experienced candidates. Further salary increases will be on the cards and relocation packages will also be on the table as more companies spread the net to attract the right people.

As for sub sectoral trends, we are currently anticipating a strong, sustained demand for more engineers, with similar continual need for more scientific roles. Gene cell therapy could be a sub sector which will have a really big need.

Overall, we expect the total number of Manufacturing and Engineering **roles to grow by 30% in 2022.**

Information Technology

To say that 2021 was a busy year in IT recruitment would be a considerable understatement! Perhaps the simplest way to emphasise how much demand there was in IT over the course of the last 12 months is to point out that last January there were 7 specialist IT recruiters working for *FRS Recruitment*. We now employ 19!

You can understand that demand when practically every medium to large sized company in Ireland moved at least some department to operating on a remote basis – creating a demand for qualified IT personnel like never before. Over the last 12 months we estimate the total number of job postings in IT grew by more than 30%, from an already strong base.

The squeeze on qualified candidates and the general talent shortage has become extremely apparent in 2021 and no doubt will lead to an increased focus on the pipeline of graduates and training.

Languages such as Java, .NET and Python have never been in such demand and we've also witnessed a surge in the number of positions across project management, business analysis and data roles, especially in the second half of 2021. While cyber security has also become a hot topic and an area of even greater focus.

While Dublin continues to dominate as the top location for IT roles, the remote working aspect that has been ramped up through the pandemic, meaning we are seeing a much wider spread of roles, especially when it comes to accommodating the needs of qualified personnel who might want to remain in rural locations. We estimate that 4 out of every 5 roles now provide hybrid/ remote working opportunities.

The strong demand in the sector has also created a push on salaries. On average we believe salary levels in the sector have risen by approximately 20%, an expected consequence when skills shortage meets high demand.

What to expect from IT in 2022?

Volume, volume, volume! That's certainly what we anticipate will be the need from employers in 2022. They won't just be looking to fill one position at a time, it will be 4 or 5 and they will need these new people to have started yesterday! Team sizes will also grow, with office space requirements no longer limiting the scope of employers thanks to the flexibility provided by remote working/ hybrid.

We also would expect to see an increased level of targeting of people currently working abroad, particularly in roles where the demand can't be met from the existing talent pool in Ireland, eg. developers.

In terms of trends, we are expecting to see more blockchain and crypto roles advertised in 2022. The boom in those sub sectors hasn't really hit Ireland yet but we anticipate that will change in 2022. We also expect to see more US companies set up operations here.

All that said, because 2021 has been such a mammoth year for IT recruitment, *FRS Recruitment* does expect to see a certain degree of levelling off over the next 12 months. But even just maintaining the current level of demand means there will still be a massive number of roles available in this sector.

Overall, we expect the total number of **IT roles to grow by 10% in 2022** – but that represents further growth from a very, very high base.



Commercial

For the commercial sector, 2021 saw recruitment make up for the significant slowdown that was experienced in 2020, as businesses started to recover from the loss of business and more conservative outlook driven by the first waves of the pandemic.

This led to a strong bounce back across the sector over the last 12 months, as revenues returned, and businesses sought to catch up on their growth strategies.

Looking at the broad sector, *FRS Recruitment* estimates there was a 20% increase in the number of commercial roles available in 2021.

There was a particular demand for finance and sales positions, as well as support function roles such as Admin, Customer Service and Finance jobs. These were broadly across the entire commercial sector.

The demand for good talent also saw a broader outlook from employers with many offering, temporary and hybrid positions for roles that would normally have been permanent. More dual roles were also being offered such as positions that covered Accounts and Admin. Within the sub sectors there was a notable jump in Construction sales positions.

The trends also didn't seem to be regionally specific, with the demand being spread around the country. This was aided by the push for more blended working arrangements. This was primarily driven by the candidates with employers having to adjust to remain competitive for talent.

Salary trends remained broadly static in 2021, but there was movement on other elements of the employee package, such as flexible working, pensions as well as leave entitlements and health benefits.

What to expect from Commercial in 2022?

FRS Recruitment forecasts the level of demand will remain broadly high in 2022, in line with the major growth experienced last year.

We are anticipating a major demand for talent management and HR roles to better support the development of company culture as well as talent retention. Strategic marketing positions will also be another growth area.

This will also see employers putting more time into how they present their employment packages. Employers will be striving to ensure they get more longevity and to get their staff to buy into the corporate culture. The further broadening of benefits is also likely to come to the fore as part of these efforts.

Overall, we expect to see the total number of **commercial roles grow by 10% in 2022.**

Temporary Roles – Industrial and Commercial

With a lot of different sectors experiencing shortages in personnel, there was a strong and sustained demand for more temporary employees across all of 2021. We estimate that over the course of the last year the number of temporary roles handled by our team grew by 30%. This was particularly apparent in the Industrial and Commercial space.

For Industrial there was a severe lack of candidates for general operative type roles, along with drivers, machine operators and warehouse positions. This applied in waste, energy, food production, manufacturing and logistics. It would be fair to say that this was a near universal problem.

FRS Recruitment was asked to source new personnel for a significant number of companies who had previously handled their own recruitment in house. Many of these businesses found it challenging to attract the right people when they needed positions filled in a hurry to meet increased production. Demand was so high that temporary roles were being quickly converted into permanent positions in some areas.

There was also an increase in demand for temporary employees to cover heavy industrial or medical devices. Fulfilling these roles was helped by the better salary conditions available, attracting greater interest and more candidates.

On the commercial side the growth in candidates working from home helped build a broader pool, with geographical restrictions not hampering the availability of personnel for many of these roles. We saw strong growth in finance and call centre roles.

There was also a dramatic increase in the need for more clerical staff within the HSE across the country – people to work as swabbers and vaccinators in the Covid testing centres as well as the vaccination centres.

The broad demand for these roles – has meant that it has become a candidate market, which has placed upward pressure on the hourly pay rates and other benefits available as businesses strive to remain competitive. For example, in the industrial space, there's been an approximate €2 per hour increase in wages and benefits over the course of the year.

What to expect from Temporary roles in 2022?

Demand will continue to be strong in all areas which will place more pressure on salaries. We are currently forecasting a further 10% rise in the cost of labour with the market continuing to be candidate driven.

There may be some increase in the number of candidates available once the PUP payments come to an end and more candidates come on the market.

Overall, we expect to see the total number of **Temporary Industrial and Commercial roles grow by 10% in 2022.**

Construction

After a year of disruption in 2020, construction came roaring back in 2021 (once they emerged from lockdown at least). That had major implications for construction recruitment, with vacancies rising across the board. To put it quite simply there has been an upturn in all roles.

FRS Recruitment experienced a rise in construction job postings of approximately 150% over the last 12 months.

These were permanent roles, with a strong regional spread. In fact, we noticed more roles regionally than in Dublin in 2021 as the construction recovery was across the country.

The recovery got to a stage where the lack of personnel was actually holding up work, with construction companies having to turn away projects due to a lack of suitable personnel. This led to many employers seeking alternative routes to getting these roles filled and as a result there was also a strong increase in the number of people we helped place who were previously working abroad.

Of course, this has also had an impact on salaries. Broadly speaking we estimate there was an increase of about 5 - 15% in salary terms, with the gap between contractors and consultancy closing.

While construction may not be the most obvious sector for remote working, that trend still began to make an impact over the last 12 months. Some employers have been considering the advantages posed by offering remote work roles in certain positions where that may be manageable, such as with quantity surveying or safety and design positions.

What to expect from Construction in 2022?

The rise in demand for more staff won't be going away and we expect to see further strong levels of growth in the construction sector. Pandemic circumstances depending, we should see demand kick in from February onwards as many employers have major projects coming up which they will be looking to advance as soon as possible (once any delays due to material supply and planning issues have been overcome).

That demand will mean more upward pressure on salary levels and also a further widening of the net as construction companies seek to bring in more experienced personnel currently working overseas to meet any shortfalls in personnel.

We are anticipating the demand will be for roles across the sector but again there is likely to be a real push for more safety, CAD and quantity surveying personnel.

Overall, we expect to see the number of **construction roles grow by 40% in 2022.**

Agriculture

The last 12 months have been extremely busy when it comes to agricultural recruitment. So much so that *FRS Recruitment* recorded a 50% increase in the number of roles we handled.

In some areas the needs of the sector were even more prominent. We saw a two fold increase in demand for sales commercial roles, boosted by the growing level of confidence amongst businesses who were in a growth phase again. We also saw a surge in demand for marketing roles as clients realised the importance of online stores and online presence during the pandemic.

There has also been a shortage of farm labourers throughout the country, while there was also a strong push for international farm management roles. The only area where there was a bit of a decline was in the lesser demand for graduate roles.

The pressure to attract more staff has had a knock-on impact on the terms available for some roles, particularly those where there has been a strong level of competition. For example, with so many different businesses competing for commercial sales roles we estimate that basic salaries have risen by approximately 30% as a result.

This was aided by the difficulties that arose for companies in attracting experienced candidates, with many candidates feeling uncertain about moving roles while the pandemic continued.

Location wise we noticed a particularly strong increase in demand in the Munster area, especially in County Cork.

What to expect in 2022?

The good news is that the growth is widely expected to continue – at a strong level – in 2022 and the market will continue to be highly active.

We are forecasting further demand for agri marketing professionals, as more and more businesses understand the importance of this business function. We also see some movement developing in roles related to agri technology, with that aspect of the sector growing at a fast pace – developing new technologies and opening new markets. A prime example of this growth is *FRS Recruitment's* sister company *Herdwatch*, who will be hiring 40 staff over the next 3 years as part of their growth strategy and expansion plans.

We also believe that there will be an increase in the number of graduate roles, as companies focus on the importance of having a pipeline of new entrants to move up the ranks.

With the marketing continuing to experience such strong growth, broadly speaking we anticipate there will be a move from many employers to retain existing staff and attract

new, experienced personnel. This may create upward pressure on terms offered, including remuneration, benefits and career development opportunities.

We also believe there may be a move to attract more international candidates for labour intensive roles, such as farm labourers in the next year. There is a particular shortage in this aspect of the market, for these types of roles and for people to work in food processing. We expect to see companies throwing their net wider to help address these shortfalls over the course of the next 12 months.

Overall, we expect the number of **agriculture roles grow by 30% in 2022**

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