

Winter Skills Bulletin 2023

Transversal skills in Ireland's labour market

(Q4 2022 - Q3 2023)



1. Introduction & labour market context

Transversal skills are recognised as increasingly important in today's job market, driven by factors such as technology (including AI), the green transition, globalisation, and the changing world of work. Possessing a range of relevant transversal skills will help to ensure that workers can pivot to undertake new tasks and even new roles, allowing them to remain, not just employable, but employable in quality jobs. Transversal skills, as defined by ESCO¹, *are learned and proven abilities which are commonly seen as necessary or valuable for effective action in virtually any kind of work, learning or life activity (and) are not exclusively related to any particular context (job, occupation, academic discipline, [...] etc.).*"

This paper outlines the transversal skills that were in the greatest demand in adverts for jobs in Ireland posted online in the 12 months to September 2023. It draws on CEDEFOP's Online Vacancy Analysis Tool for Europe (OVATE), a database of online job adverts and one of the few large data sources that can directly identify the skills employers seek in a timely manner (OVATE is updated quarterly).² The data collected relates to jobs advertised across a range of public (e.g. jobsireland.ie) and private (e.g. irishjobs.ie) online recruitment portals, as well as job search engines (e.g. Monster).³

1.1 Classifications used

In OVATE, jobs are classified by occupation using the International Standard Classification of Occupations (ISCO) while skills are categorised according to the European Skills, Competences, Qualifications and Occupations (ESCO) classification.

Based on a map created by the Office of National Statistics (UK), the SLMRU has mapped OVATE data, to SOC (Standard Occupation Classification), which is more commonly used to describe the labour market in Ireland. Occupations can be grouped⁴ according to one of four skill levels, each of which is based on the length of time required for a person to become competent in performing the tasks associated with a job, through formal education and/or work experience: low skilled (elementary occupations), medium-low skilled (administrative, caring/personal services, sales and operative occupations), medium-high skilled (skilled trades, associate professionals, other managers (SOC 12)), or high skilled (professionals, corporate managers (SOC 11)).

1.2 Labour market context

When interpreting data from online job adverts, it is important to bear in mind that job adverts do not directly reflect patterns in employment levels. Figure 1.1a shows how the distribution of occupational groups in online job adverts over the period Q4 2022-Q3 2023 differs from that of employment in quarter 3 2023 (Figure 1.1.b). Professional occupations for example represent nearly a third of all online job adverts, but less than a quarter of employment. And while elementary occupations make up just 5% of all online job postings, they account for 10% of total employment.

In addition, as illustrated in Figure 1.2, the number of recent job hires in 2022 (i.e. persons who entered the labour market, changed employers, or changed jobs) was 542,000, which far exceeded the employment growth (150,200) over the period. In particular, recent job hires far outstripped employment growth for elementary, sales, professional and associate professional occupations, meaning that we need to be aware that the job being advertised could be due to replacing people who have changed jobs rather than signalling increasing employment.

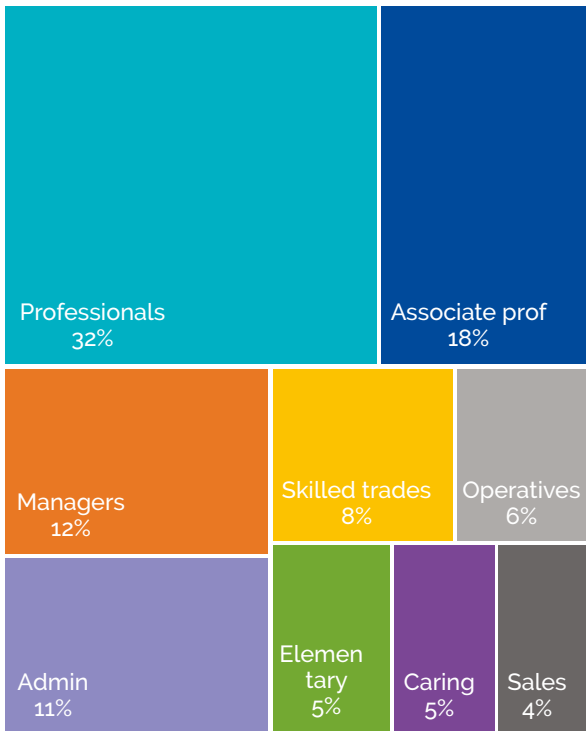
1 EC & CEDEFOP (2021). Towards a structured and consistent terminology on transversal skills and competences.

2 There are, however, many types of indirect skills measures, such as employment by occupation or field of education. Smaller datasets such as PIAAC (OECD) or the European Skills for Jobs Survey (CEDEFOP) provide useful information on skills, although they are based on smaller population sizes and are updated less frequently.

3 To minimise duplication, where the same job vacancy may be advertised on more than one portal, the vacancy data undergoes a deduplication process.

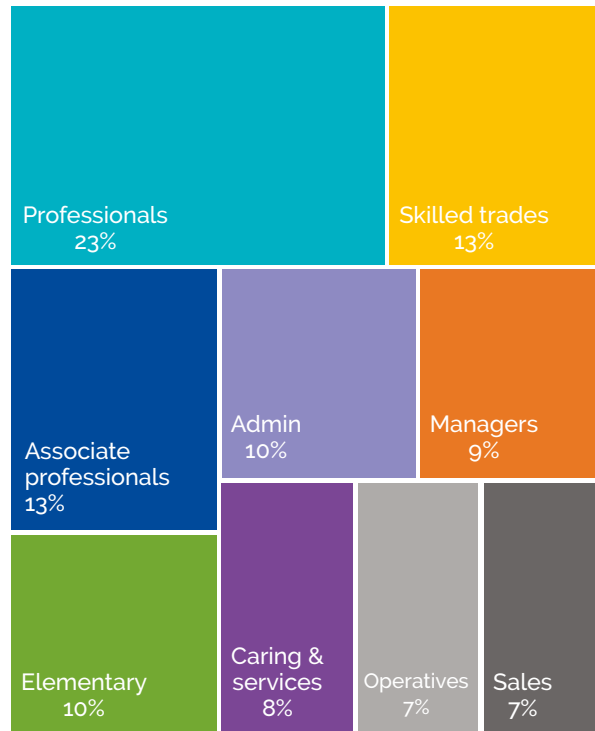
4 [SOC2010 volume 1: structure and descriptions of unit groups - Office for National Statistics](#)

Figure 1.1a. Online job adverts by occupational group, Q4 2022-Q3 2023.



Source: OVATE (CEDFEOP)

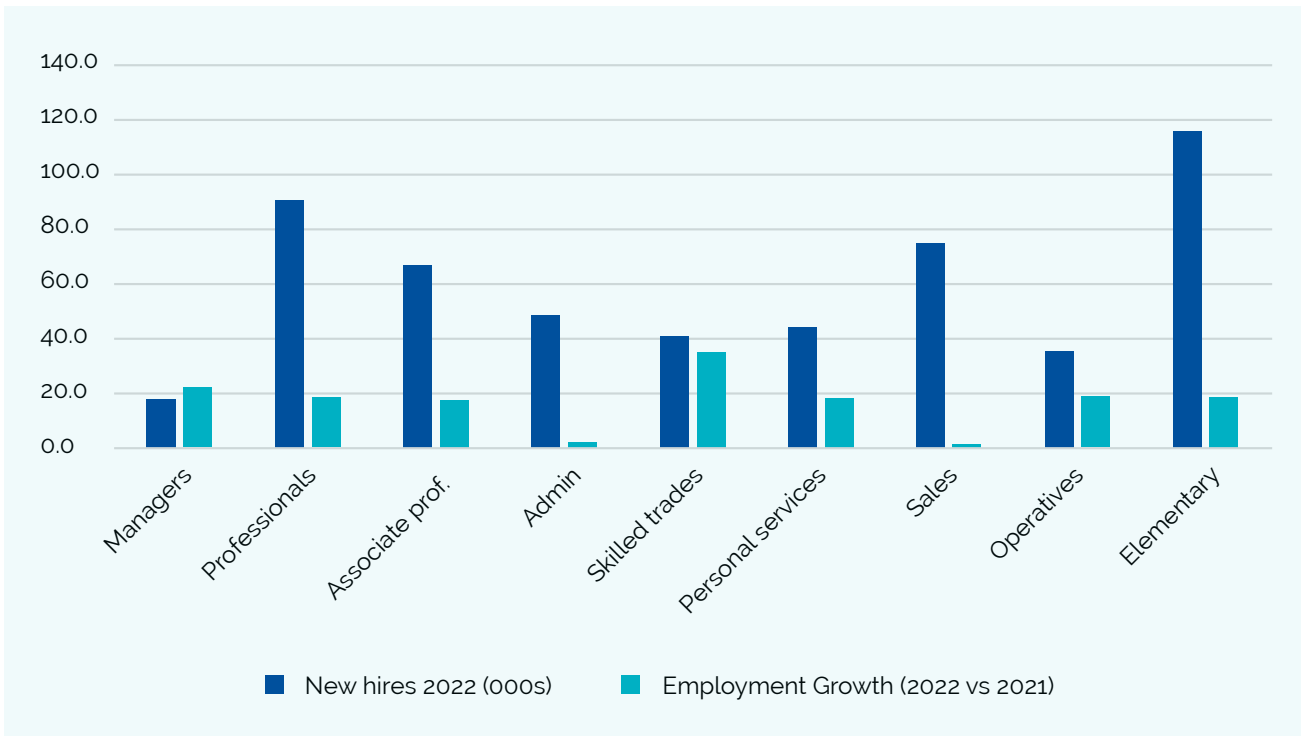
Figure 1.1b. Employment by occupational group*, Q3 2023.



Source: CSO (LFS)

*Excludes not stated

Figure 1.2. New hires* (000s) in 2022 and employment growth (000s), 2021 vs 2022 by occupation.



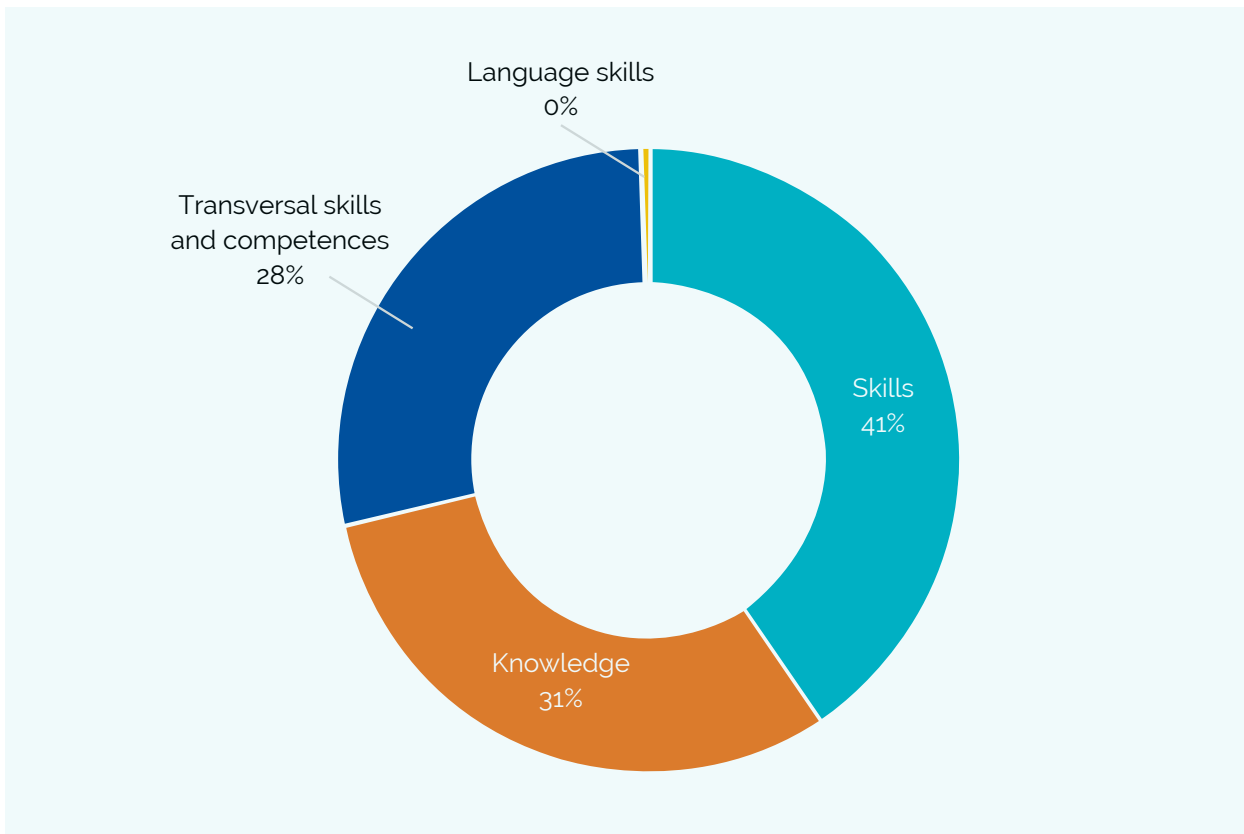
Source: Labour Force Survey

*New hires refer to the sum of the four quarters in 2022.

2. Skills mentions in online job adverts

Over the period October 2022-September 2023, there were nearly 400,000 job adverts for posts in Ireland and nearly 9 million skill mentions. While job-specific skills and knowledge accounted for 41% and 31% of all skill mentions respectively, transversal skills accounted for a considerable share – well over a quarter of all skills mentioned in online job adverts.

Figure 2.1. Distribution of skill mentions in adverts for jobs in Ireland by sub-classification, Q4 2022-Q3 2023.



Source: CEDEFOP (OVATE)

*Excludes not stated category.

2.1 Top 10 Transversal skills in demand

In the 12-month period between October 2022 and September 2023, the most frequently occurring detailed skill mentions in adverts for jobs in Ireland included the following:



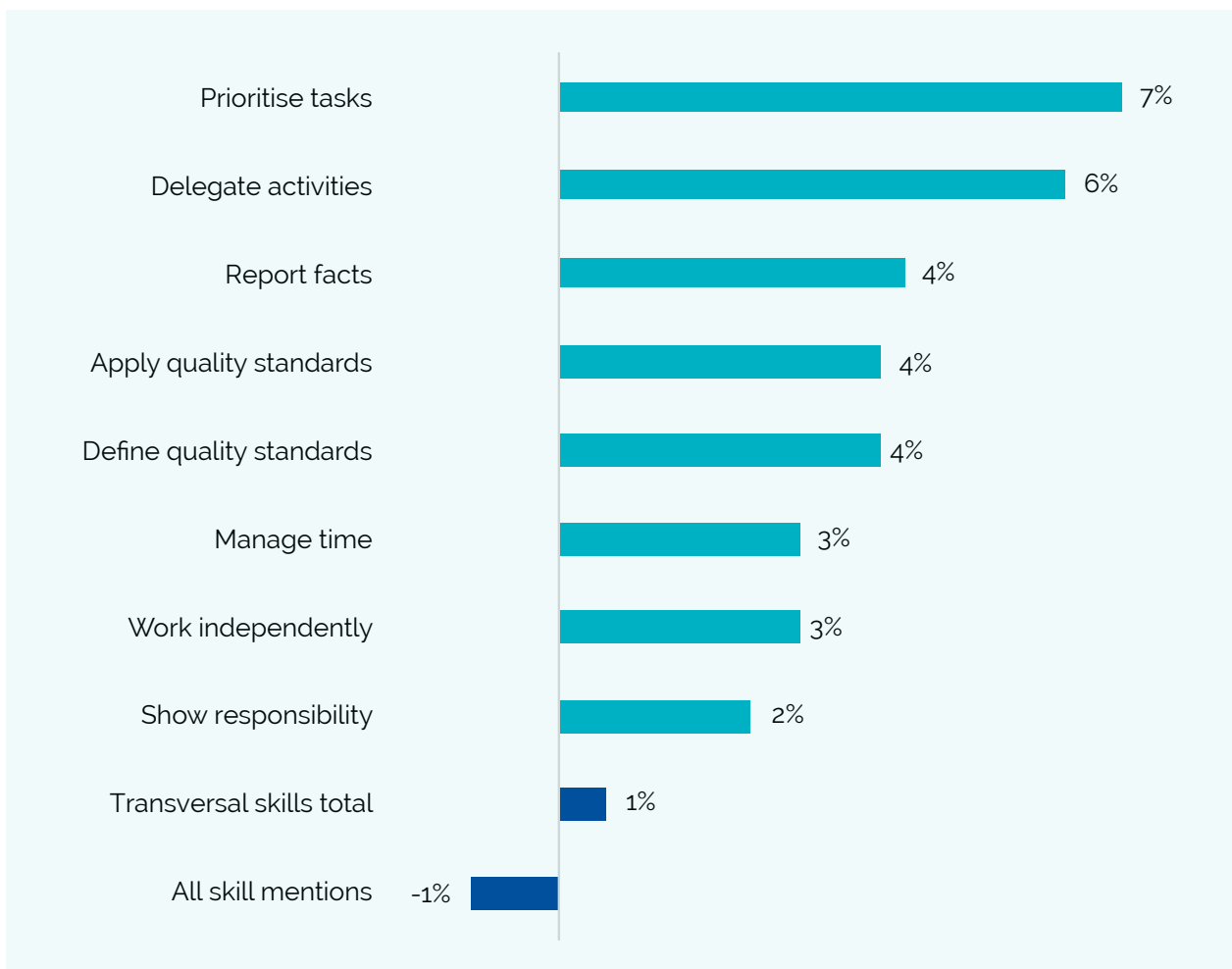
Source: OVATE (CEDEFOP)

Combined, these ten skills made up more than two thirds of all transversal skills mentioned in online job adverts in the year to September 2023.

2.2 Top growing transversal skills

Despite a 1% decline in the number of skills mentioned for jobs in Ireland in the year to September 2023, the number of transversal skills mentions actually grew (by 1%). The growth was even higher for some specific transversal skills, with the strongest growth observed for those outlined in Figure 2.2.

Figure 2.2. % change in detailed transversal skill mentions, Oct' 21-Sept'22 – Oct'22 – Sept'23.



Source: CEDEFOP (OVATE)

*For skills with a minimum of 25,000 mentions (i.e. 1% of all transversal skill mentions).

3. Occupations⁵ for which these skills are most relevant

Table 1 shows the shares of job adverts of each occupational skill level that mention the top ten transversal skills. *Adapt to change* and *work in teams* were both key skills across all occupational skill levels, with *adapt to change* featuring in 98% of job adverts for low skilled occupations. While *prioritise tasks* also appeared in similar shares of job adverts across all occupational skill levels, the remainder of the top transversal skills tended to occur most frequently for high and medium high skilled occupations. This is particularly the case for skills such as

- *manage time* (occurring in just 7% of all job adverts for low skilled occupations)
- *provide leadership* (appearing in just 7% of job adverts for medium-low and 1% of job adverts for low skilled occupations)
- *think proactively* (appearing in just 6% of low skilled occupations).

Table 1. Top ten transversal skills as a share of total job adverts by occupational skill level, Q4 2022-Q3 2023.

	High skilled	Medium-high skilled	Medium-low skilled	Low skilled	Total occupations
Adapt to change	80%	80%	87%	98%	83%
Work in teams	74%	78%	72%	75%	75%
Prioritise tasks	47%	42%	47%	41%	45%
Show responsibility	58%	42%	33%	14%	45%
Assist customers	43%	29%	35%	14%	35%
Tolerate stress	42%	29%	35%	19%	35%
Manage time	40%	44%	18%	7%	34%
Think proactively	32%	25%	19%	6%	25%
Apply quality standards	23%	32%	14%	10%	23%
Provide leadership	35%	23%	7%	1%	23%

Source: CEDEFOP (OVATE)

For each of the most frequently occurring transversal skills presented in Section 2.1, the definition (from ESCO) and the top occupations for which the skill is mentioned in the largest share of adverts are outlined.

⁵ Occupations for which there were at least 1,500 job adverts in the 12 months to quarter 4 2023.

3.1 Adapt to change

Adapt to change is described as *the ability to alter one's attitude or behaviour to accommodate modifications in the workplace*. It occurred in most (99% or more) of the job adverts for the occupations in Figure 3.1. These occupations ranged from higher skilled occupations (e.g. advertising accounts managers) to lower skilled occupations (e.g. kitchen/catering assistants), as well as medium-low skilled occupations (e.g. healthcare assistants) and medium-high skilled (business sales executives).

Figure 3.1. Occupations* for which adapt to change was mentioned in 99% of job adverts, Q4 2022-Q4 2023.



Source: CEDEFOP (OVATE)

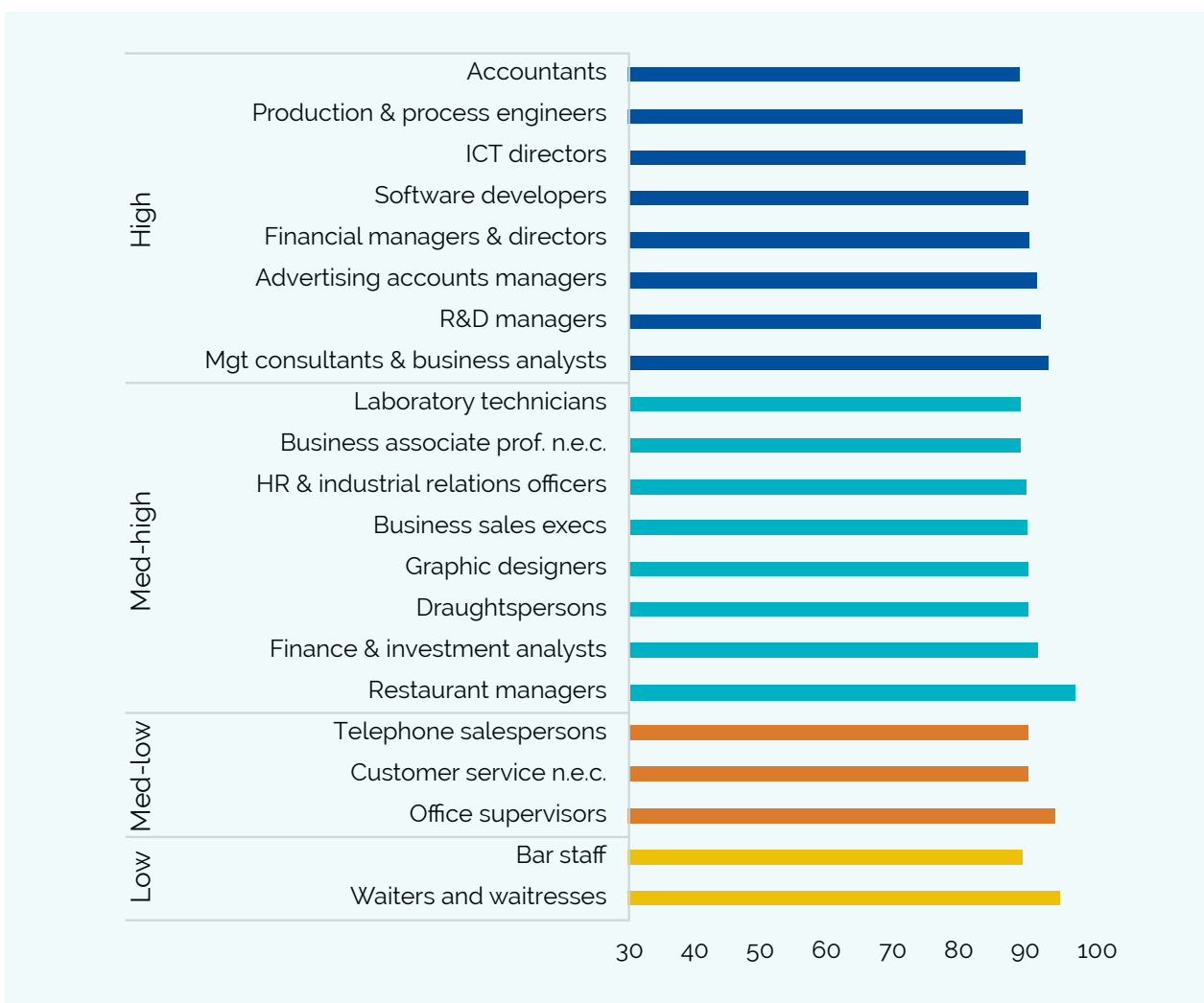
*For occupations with at least 1,500 job ads.

When compared to one year earlier, the share of job adverts mentioning *adapt to change* skills increased for more than half of all occupations, albeit only slightly for most cases (less than a one percentage point increase); exceptions were for receptionists and health associate professionals n.e.c. (e.g. sports or massage therapists), for which the share of job ads mentioning this skill grew by 1.2 percentage points and 2.9 percentage points respectively. Nonetheless, for both receptionists and health associate professionals, the share of job adverts mentioning *adapt to change* remains outside the top 20 (and therefore these occupations do not appear in Figure 3.1).

3.2 Work in teams

Working in teams involves *the ability to work confidently within a group, with each doing their part in the service of the whole*. This detailed skill occurred in at least 88% of the advertisements for the jobs mentioned in Figure 3.2. While this skill was in demand across all occupational skill levels, it was most pronounced for medium-high skilled occupations (e.g. restaurant managers) and high skilled occupations (management consultants, R & D managers etc).

Figure 3.2. Occupations* for which work in teams was mentioned in >88% of job adverts, Q4 2022-Q4 2023.



Source: CEDEFOP (OVATE)

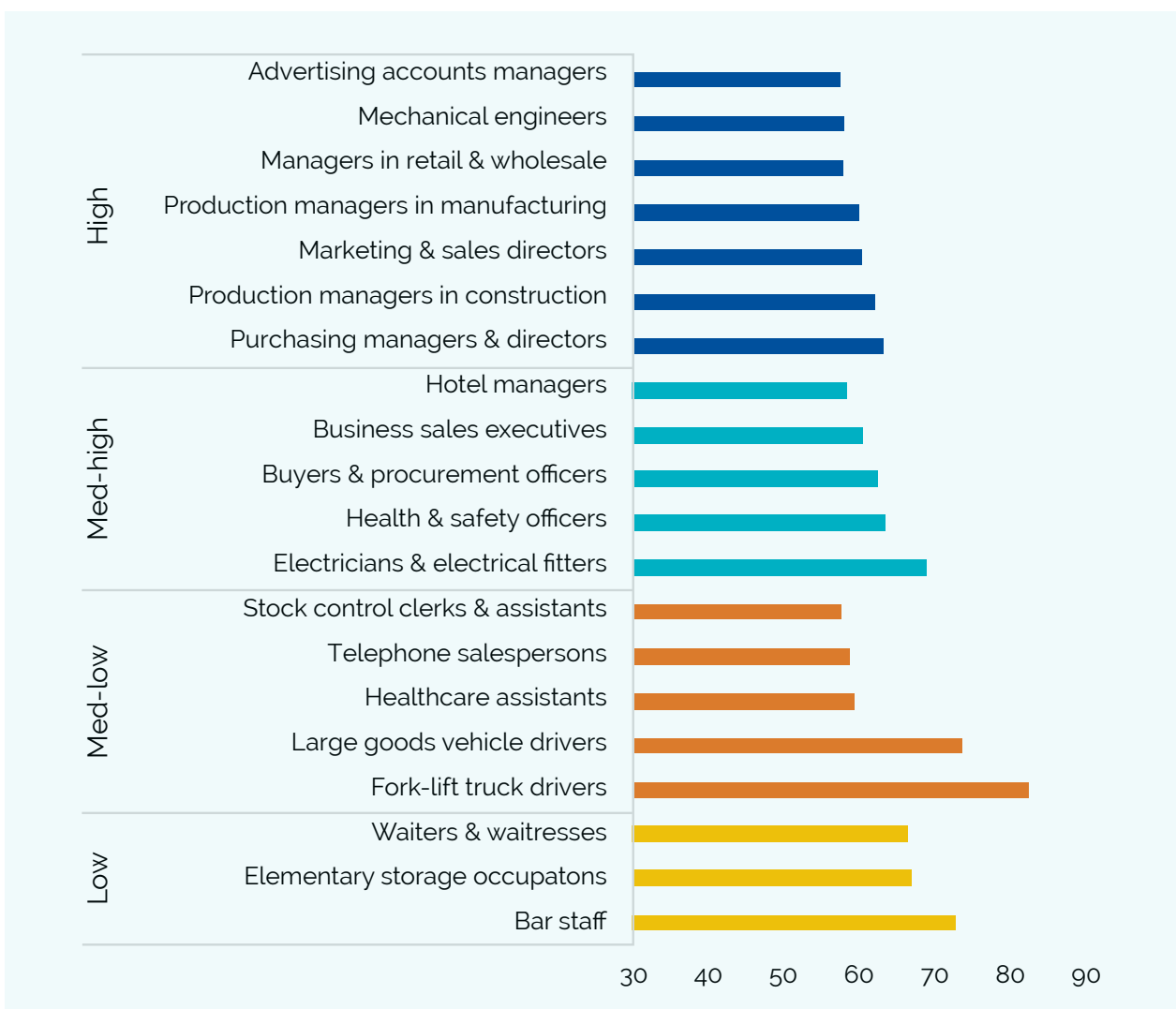
*For occupations with at least 1,500 job ads.

When compared to one year earlier, the share of job adverts mentioning the ability to work in teams increased mostly for medium-high and medium-low occupations (paper/wood machine operatives, childminders, government admin occupations, accounting technicians, healthcare assistants, electricians, and sales assistants). Nonetheless, the strongest increase of all was for higher education teaching professionals, for which the share rose to nearly 69% (up from 48%). Despite these increases, none of the occupations for which the relevance of this skill grew most strongly appear amongst the top 20, and as a result, do not appear in Figure 3.2.

3.3 Prioritise tasks

The ability to prioritise tasks requires an ability to *organise tasks according to their priority*. It was identified in over half (>57%) of the job adverts for the occupations in Figure 3.3, although the share rises to in excess of 70% for bar staff, large goods vehicle drivers, and forklift drivers. The ability to prioritise tasks features across a range of skill levels, from lower skilled occupations (e.g. bar staff), medium-low skilled (e.g. stock control assistants), medium-high (e.g. electricians) and high skilled occupations (e.g. production managers in construction; production managers in manufacturing).

Figure 3.3. Occupations* for which prioritise tasks was mentioned in 57%+ of job adverts, Q4 2022-Q4 2023.



Source: CEDEFOP (OVATE)

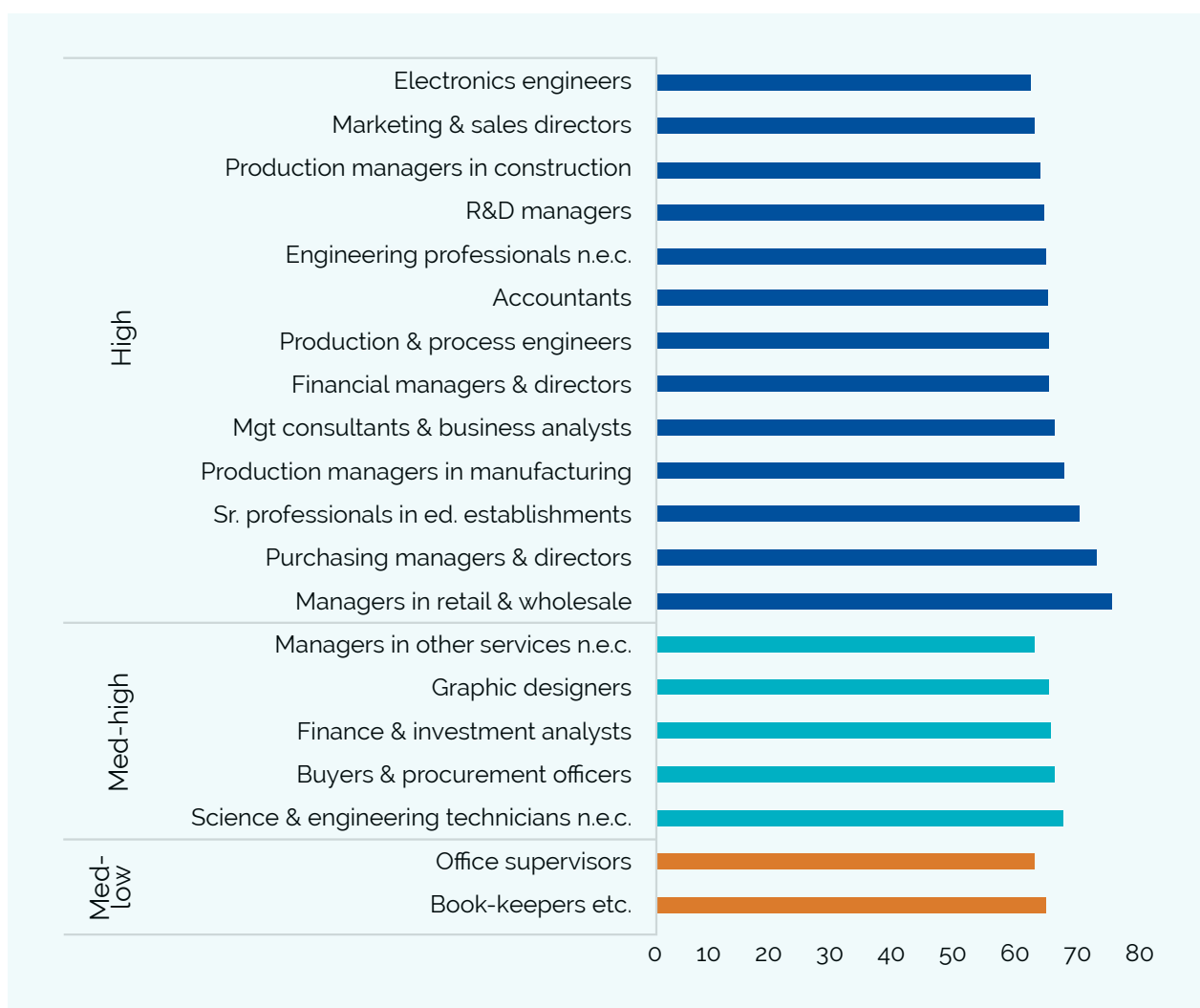
*For occupations with at least 1,500 job ads.

When compared to one year earlier, the share of job adverts mentioning the ability to *prioritise tasks* increased across most (80%) of the frequently occurring job adverts, although the largest increases were for higher education teaching professionals, bar staff, elementary storage occupations, draughtspersons, hotel managers, and healthcare assistants, each of which saw an increase of at least six percentage points. Nonetheless, despite this increase, the share of job adverts for higher education teaching professionals and draughtspersons that mentioned this skill was lower than 57% and therefore these occupations are not detailed in Figure 3.3.

3.4 Show responsibility

This detailed skill requires an ability to *accept responsibility and accountability for one's own professional decisions and actions, or those delegated to others*. For the occupations in Figure 3.4, this skill was mentioned in at least 60% of job adverts. Notably, being able to show responsibility featured across a range of financial-related occupations, including accountants and purchasing managers (high-skilled), financial analysts and buyers/procurement officers (medium-high skilled), and book-keepers (medium-low skilled). This skill was also particularly relevant for engineering occupations (including, electronics, production/process, and science/engineering technicians).

Figure 3.4 Occupations* for which show responsibility was mentioned in 60%+ of job adverts, Q4 2022-Q4 2023.



Source: CEDEFOP (OVATE)

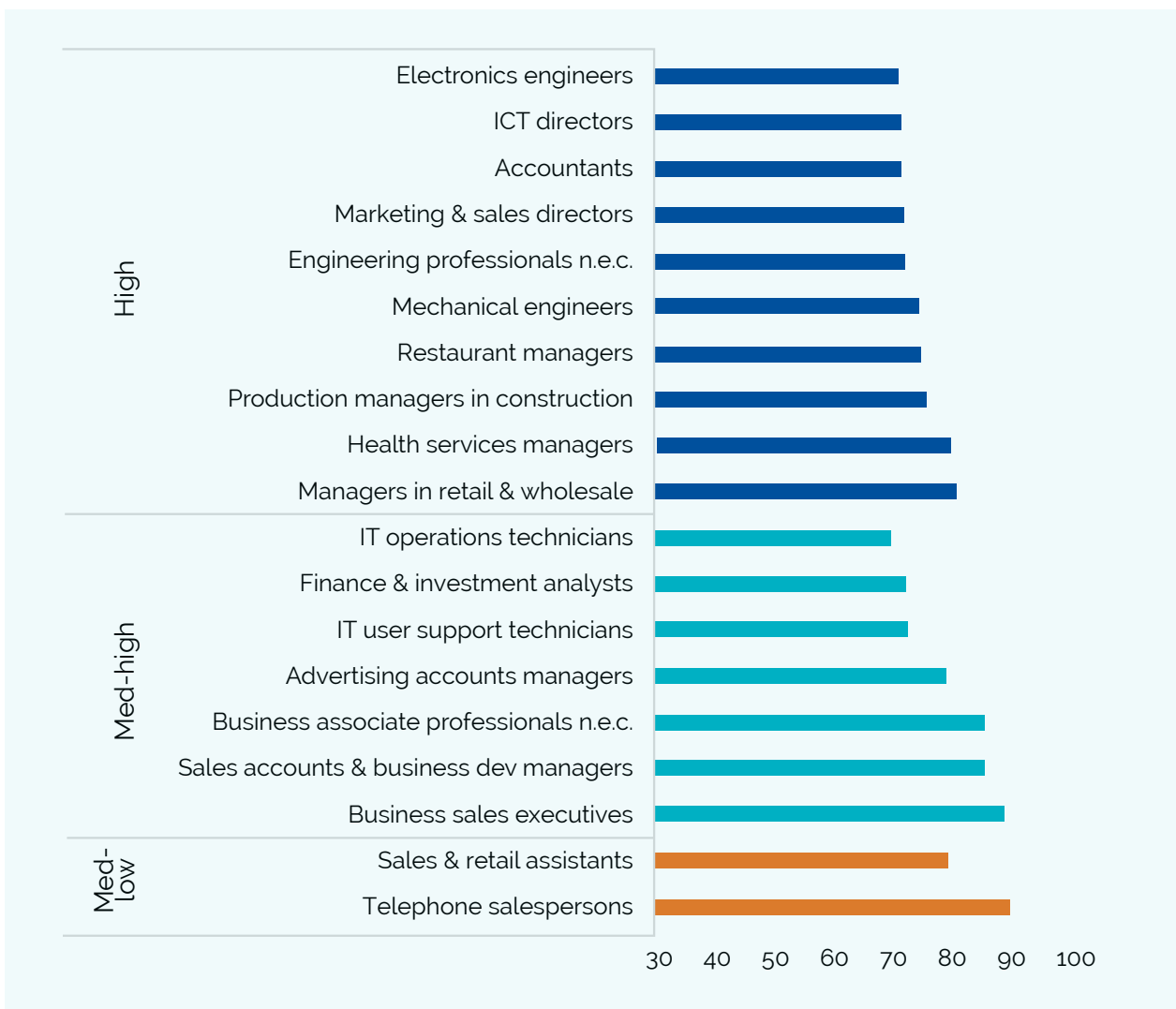
*For occupations with at least 1,500 job ads.

When compared to the preceding twelve-month period, this skill was mentioned in an increasing share of job adverts related to engineering and managerial posts in particular (e.g. mechanical engineers, draughtspersons, R&D managers, purchasing managers, and production managers in construction), as well as graphic designers, telephone salespersons, and business-related associate professionals n.e.c. Of these occupations, only draughtspersons, telephone salespersons and business-related associate professionals n.e.c. had shares for this skill below 60%, and as a result do not feature in Figure 3.4.

3.5 Assist customers

Assisting customers requires an ability to *provide support and advice to customers in making purchasing decisions by finding out their needs, selecting suitable service and products for them and politely answering questions about products and services*. At least 66% of job adverts for the occupations in Figure 3.5 required the ability to assist customers. Unsurprisingly, many related to business or sales occupations, but health related occupations (e.g. nurses, health services managers) and ICT occupations (e.g. ICT directors, ICT technicians) also featured.

Figure 3.5. Occupations for which assist customers was mentioned in 66%+ of job adverts, Q4 2022-Q4 2023.



Source: CEDEFOP (OVATE)

*For occupations with at least 1,500 job ads.

Occupations for which this skill grew most strongly in relevance (i.e. occurred in a higher share of job adverts compared to the previous year) were those relating to the provision of services; these occupations included beauticians, home carers, healthcare assistants, sales (telephone and retail), and hotel managers. With the exception of telephone salespersons and retail salespersons, however, the share of job adverts of these occupations was below 66% and are not detailed in Figure 3.5.

3.6 Tolerate stress

This skill is described as the ability to *maintain a temperate mental state and effective performance under pressure or adverse circumstances*. More than half of adverts for the roles in Figure 3.6 required an ability to tolerate stress, with the share rising to over two thirds or more for high and medium-high skilled finance-related occupations (e.g. buyers and procurement officers, finance and investment analysts, and accountants).

Figure 3.6 Occupations for which tolerate stress was mentioned in 55%+ of job adverts, Q4 2022-Q4 2023.



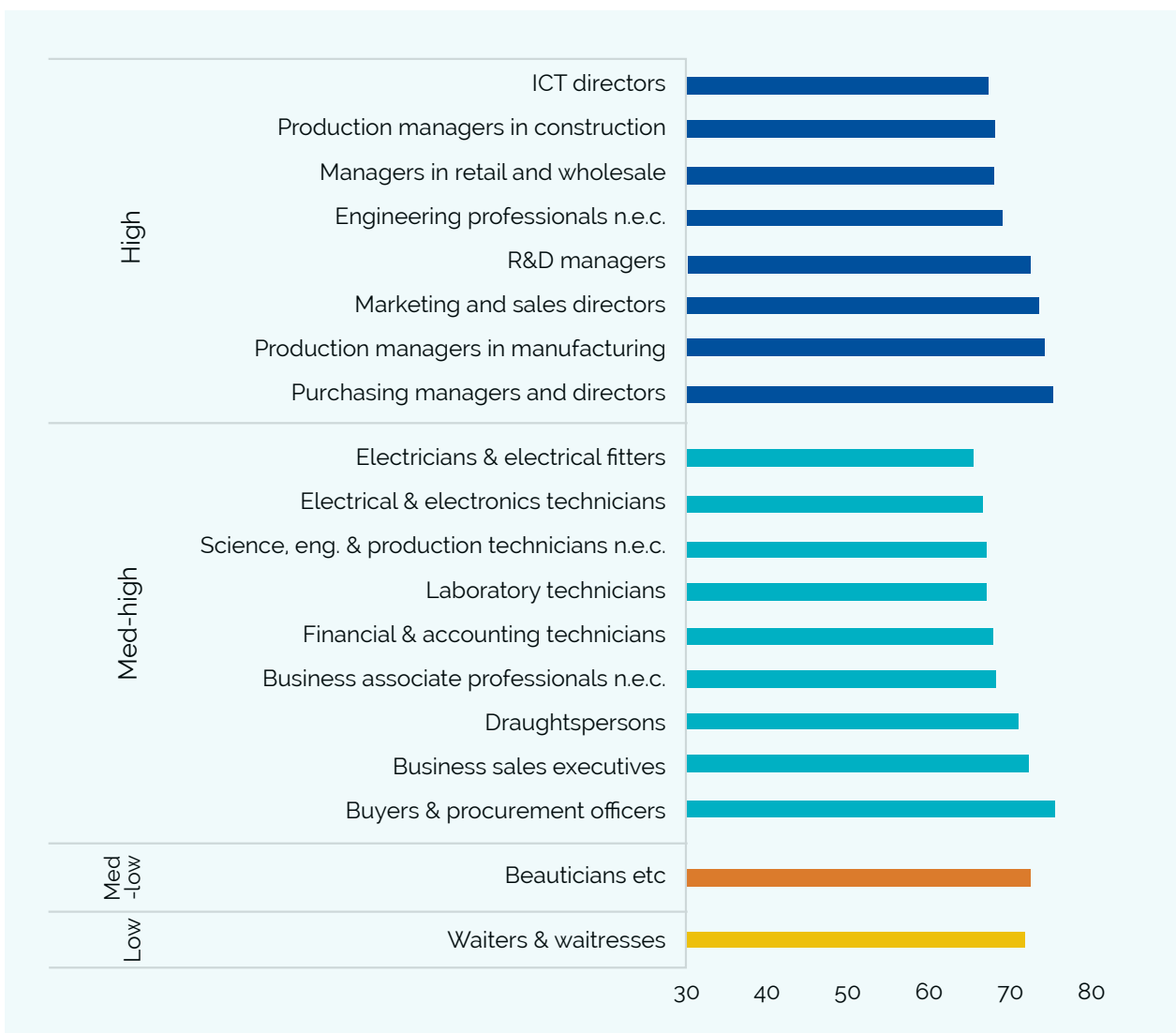
Source: CEDEFOP (OVATE)
 *For occupations with at least 1,500 job ads.

When compared to the preceding 12-month period, the share of job adverts that mentioned the ability to *tolerate stress* grew most strongly (by at least four percentage points) for production managers in construction, office supervisors, accountants, and buyers/procurement officers. Each of these occupations also appeared amongst the top 20 most relevant occupations for this skill (as detailed in Figure 3.6).

3.7 Manage time

Managing time is the ability to *plan the time sequence of events, programmes and activities, as well as the work of others*. At least 65% of job adverts for the occupations in Figure 3.7 mentioned an ability to manage time, with the share rising to three quarters for buyers and procurement officers and purchasing managers. This skill was in particular demand amongst med-high skilled occupations related to engineering fields (e.g. electricians, lab technicians, draughtspersons) as well as a range of managerial occupations (e.g. managers in purchasing, construction, retail/wholesale, and manufacturing).

Figure 3.7. Occupations for which manage time was mentioned in 65%+ of job adverts, Q4 2022-Q4 2023.



Source: CEDEFOP (OVATE)

*For occupations with at least 1,500 job ads.

When compared to one year earlier, the share of adverts mentioning the ability to manage time grew most strongly for services related occupations (e.g. health associate professionals, hotel managers, healthcare assistants, health services managers, beauticians, waiting staff and chefs), followed by engineering related occupations (draughtspersons, electricians, production managers in manufacturing). For each of these occupations, the share of adverts with this skill grew by between 3.5 and 10 percentage points. Despite the growth, this skill appeared in fewer than 65% of job adverts for the health-related occupations and hotel managers (and do not feature in Figure 5.7).

3.8 Think proactively

Being able to think proactively is described as *taking initiatives to come up with improvements*. The think proactively skill appeared in at least one third of the occupations in Figure 3.8, rising to over a half for HR/ industrial relations officers and health/safety officers. While most of the occupations for which thinking proactively was relevant were high or medium-high skilled occupations, a number of medium-low skilled occupations also featured, particularly those which involve dealing with people (e.g. HR/industrial relations officers, office supervisors, and sales/customer service roles). This is the only skill for which low skilled occupations do not figure amongst the top 20 most relevant occupations.

Figure 3.8 Occupations for which think proactively was mentioned in 36%+ of job adverts, Q4 2022-Q4 2023.



Source: CEDEFOP (OVATE)

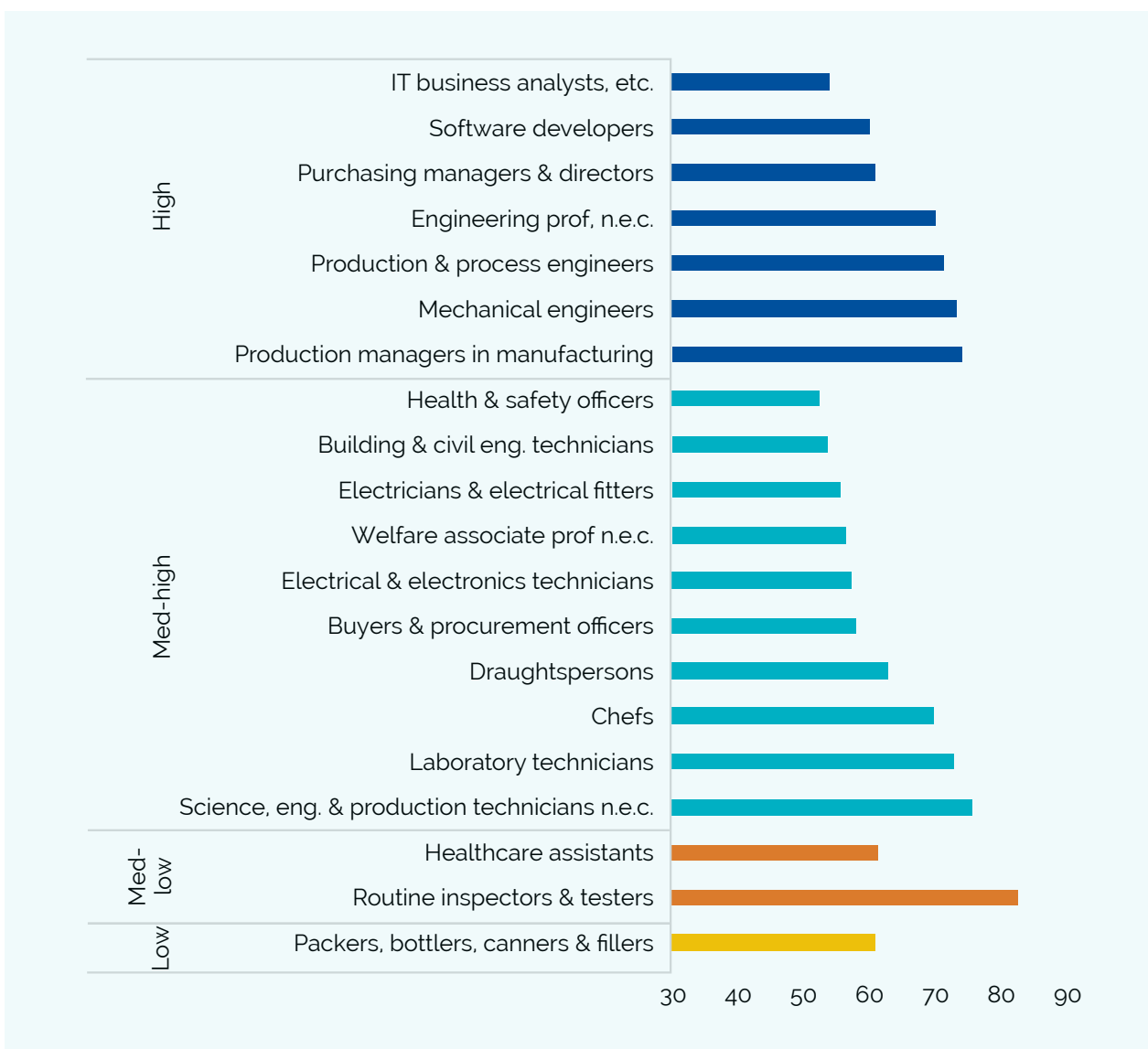
*For occupations with at least 1,500 job ads.

Being able to *think proactively* was mentioned in a growing share of job adverts across a wide range of different occupations, although a majority of the top 10 growing occupations were for sales or business roles (telephone salespersons, customer service, marketing/sales directors, financial managers, business associate professionals n.e.c., and management consultants). Of these occupations, only financial managers had shares mentioning this skill that was lower than 36% (and is not detailed in Figure 3.8).

3.9 Apply quality standards

Applying quality standards is described as the skill to be able to *follow procedures which prevent errors in creation and delivery of a product, a solution or a service to customers*. Engineering (both high and medium-high skilled) related occupations featured strongly in this set, but chefs, healthcare assistants, and welfare/housing associate professionals also featured. For the occupations in Figure 3.9, at least one half of job adverts specified a requirement for this skill.

Figure 3.9 Occupations for which apply quality standards was mentioned in 50%+ of job adverts, Q4 2022-Q4 2023.



Source: CEDEFOP (OVATE)

*For occupations with at least 1,500 job ads.

Compared to the preceding 12-month period, occupations for which job adverts had higher shares mentioning the skill of being able to *apply quality standards* were mostly related to engineering roles: draughtspersons (+5.5 pp), electricians (+5.1 pp), routine inspectors/testers (+4.9 pp), mechanical engineers (+4.1 pp), and engineering professionals n.e.c (+3pp). Other occupations for which there was growth (of at least 2.5 pp) in the share of adverts mentioning this skill included purchasing managers, welfare/housing associate professionals, and packers/bottlers, etc. Each of these occupations also figured among the top 20 most relevant occupations for this skill (as detailed in Figure 3.9).

3.10 Provide leadership

Providing leadership involves an ability to *lead and influence others to promote and contribute to policy development, advocacy, extending the boundaries and strategy at various levels*. More than two fifths of job adverts for the occupations in Figure 3.10 required the ability to provide leadership. The occupations for which this skill was most relevant were confined to high or medium-high skilled occupations only (the only one of the skills examined in this paper for which this occurs) and appeared especially for finance occupations or managers in different sectoral roles (e.g. manufacturing (inc R&D), business, education, hospitality).

Figure 3.10. Occupations for which provide leadership was mentioned in 45%+ of job adverts, Q4 2022-Q4 2023.



Source: CEDEFOP (OVATE)

*For occupations with at least 1,500 job ads.

Higher education teaching professionals, management consultants, childminders, welfare professionals n.e.c., and health services managers were the occupations for which the relevance of this experienced the strongest growth in the 12-month period to September 2023 (by between 3 and 5 percentage points each). Nonetheless, with the exception of management consultants, the ability to provide leadership was represented in a relatively small share of these occupations (less than 33%), and as a result, do not feature in Figure 3.10.

4. Conclusion

The analysis outlined here shows that when advertising jobs online, employers sought mostly job specific knowledge and skills. However, transversal skills were also clearly in demand, making up well over a quarter of total skill mentions. Of the most frequently mentioned transversal skills, the ability to [adapt to change](#), [work in teams](#), and [prioritise tasks](#) were similarly relevant across a range of occupational skill levels, while the remaining skills were relevant mostly to high and medium-high skilled occupations.

It is also worth noting that some of the top ten mentioned transversal skills were more relevant for certain types of occupational groups.

- **Finance** related occupations featured particularly strongly for the skills of [show responsibility](#), [tolerate stress](#) and to a lesser extent [provide leadership](#).
- **Engineering** related occupations featured strongly across several transversal skills, including [show responsibility](#), [manage time](#) (especially medium-high engineering roles), and [apply quality standards](#).
- **Jobs requiring interaction with other people** (e.g. HR/industrial relations officers, office supervisors, sales) featured in skills such as [assist customers](#) and [think proactively](#).

It is therefore important to provide opportunities for learners, including those already in employment, to acquire or develop these skills in addition to any job-related expertise.

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