AGC-Arcoro survey finds openings as hard to fill as in 2023; 65% of metros add jobs in July

The search for workers remains as challenging as a year ago, according to results AGC posted on Wednesday from the 2024 AGC of America-Arcoro **Workforce Survey**. Of the 1,496 responses received between July 10 and August 16, 94% of firms had open positions for hourly craft workers (up from 85% in the 2023 survey) and 79% had openings for salaried workers (vs. 69% in 2023). Among firms with open positions 94% report having a hard time filling craft positions and 92% report the same for salaried positions (vs. 88% and 86%, respectively, in 2023). Although every craft position and many salaried positions were reported hard to fill by over 60% of firms, the relative difficulty shifted from 2023 for some jobs. Hiring difficulty was reported by more firms seeking surveyors (76% of respondents in 2024 vs. 66% in 2023), estimating personnel (78% in 2024 vs. 70% in 2023), and pipefitters/welders (79% vs. 72%). In contrast, fewer respondents reported difficulty hiring traffic control personnel (61% vs. 69%), laborers (63% vs. 70%), and environmental compliance professionals (50% vs. 57%). The most common reason for difficulty, cited by 62%, was "available candidates are not qualified." Half of respondents reported, "New hires fail to show or quit shortly after starting." More firms than a year ago expect to add employees in the next 12 months: 73% (up from 69% in 2023), compared to 4% that expect to shrink (down from 8% in 2023) and 27% that expect no change. Results are broken out by region, 21 states, three revenue size ranges, four project types, and union vs. open-shop firms.

Construction employment, not seasonally adjusted, rose year-over-year (y/y) from July 2023 to July 2024 **in** 232 (65%) of the 358 **metro areas** (including divisions of larger metros) for which the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) posts construction employment data, fell in 74 (21%), and was unchanged in 52, according to an analysis AGC released on Tuesday. (For most metros, BLS posts only combined totals for mining, logging, and construction; AGC treats these totals as construction-only.) The largest job gains again occurred in Houston-The Woodlands-Sugar Land (11,700 construction jobs, 5%), followed by Las Vegas-Henderson-Paradise (9,700 construction jobs, 12%) and Baton Rouge, La. (7,400 construction jobs, 16%). Anchorage, Alaska had the largest percentage gain (19%, 2,400 construction jobs), followed by 17% gains in Anniston-Oxford-Jacksonville, Ala. (200 combined jobs) and Danville, Ill. (100 combined jobs). The largest job loss again occurred in New York City (-9,100 combined jobs, -6%), followed by Denver-Aurora-Lakewood (-4,700 combined jobs, -4%) and Minneapolis-St. Paul-Bloomington, Minn.-Wis. (-4,200 combined jobs, -4%). The largest percentage decrease again occurred in Duluth, Minn.-Wis. (-11%, -1,200 combined jobs), followed by 8% losses in Ithaca, N.Y. and Grants Pass, Ore. (-100 combined jobs each).

"Analysis of the history of data from the American Community Survey (ACS) reveals dramatic **shifts in** the makeup of **the construction labor force** over the last two decades," the National Association of Home Builders posted on Tuesday. "While the overall count of workers in the industry now approaches the historic highs of the housing boom of 2005-2006, the share of tradesmen declined from 71% in 2005 to under 61% in 2022. At the same time, the share of computer, engineering, and science occupations doubled [from 1.3% to 2.7%], and the share of management and business occupations increased" from 10% to 16%. These "numbers and shares have been rising faster in construction" than economy-wide.

BLS on Thursday posted **projections of 10-year** (2023-2033) **employment change** by industry and occupation, including 50 construction trade and management occupations. The agency projects **construction industry** employment to increase by 380,100 (4.7%) or a compound annual average of 0.5% per year, slightly more than the 0.4% growth rate for total nonfarm payroll employment and more than triple the 0.1% rate projected a year ago (for 2022-2032). Within the construction industry, growth among all **construction trades occupations** is projected to total 238,900 jobs (6.3%) over 10 years, while other occupations will account for 141,200 jobs (37% of the total construction industry increase). Laborers are projected to have the largest 10-year numerical increase, 80,000 jobs (9.2%), followed by electricians, 74,800 (13.1%). Solar photovoltaic installers are projected to have the largest percentage increase, 25.9% (but only 4,500 jobs), followed by electricians. Growth among **construction management occupations** is projected to total 42,300 (6.7%).