Atradius
Managing risk, enabling trade

Protecting cashflow this winter

Insight from Ireland’s Construction supply chain

Decision-makers in the building materials sector reveal how they're preparing for winter and managing seasonal disruption. But with rising costs, geopolitical uncertainty and changing payment behaviour, today's biggest risks extend far beyond the weather.

Why read this report?

- **Benchmark your business:** See how your organisation compares with construction businesses across Ireland in terms of preparedness, resilience and financial confidence
- **Understand what's changing:** Discover why winter 2026 presents a different challenge, as seasonal disruption combined with rising costs, supply chain volatility and geopolitical uncertainty
- **Recognise financial risk earlier:** Understand how operational disruption can ripple through projects, invoices and payment cycles, increasing pressure on cashflow
- **Prepare with confidence:** Examine practical insights from industry experts, construction businesses and Atradius to help strengthen resilience through the months ahead

About this report

Atradius commissioned an independent survey of 118 decision-makers from businesses operating across the commercial construction supply chain in Ireland and Northern Ireland. Respondents represented companies with fewer than 50 employees and an annual turnover of more than €500,000, spanning sectors including quarrying and raw processing, product manufacturing, trade retail and equipment provision.

The survey was conducted between 23 and 30 July 2026.

In addition, we spoke directly with businesses across the construction supply chain about how they manage cashflow and credit risk in practice. Their experiences are featured throughout this report as case studies, offering a closer look at how these pressures are being handled on the ground.

Why this winter feels different

> For many, this isn't simply a story of decline, but rather growth colliding with cost pressure. That combination brings its own challenges.

Winter has always tested Ireland's construction industry and its supply chain. Weather delays, shorter working days and disrupted project schedules are familiar challenges, with most businesses well used to adapting their operations to keep projects moving.

This year, however, seasonal disruption is being compounded by a wider range of economic pressures. Rising energy costs, geopolitical uncertainty and increasingly **fragile supply chains** are creating a more unpredictable operating environment. Under these conditions, operational disruption can quickly develop into financial pressure.

The scale of these challenges is already becoming clear. According to the Construction Industry Federation (CIF), almost **eight in 10** (79%) construction businesses reported year-on-year increases in raw material costs during late 2025. At the same time, the conflict in Iran has added fresh uncertainty to global energy markets. Arcadis, leading global design & consultancy organisation for natural and built assets, estimates it **could take between three and six months** for energy trading to return to pre-conflict patterns, prolonging pressure on fuel, transport and material costs.

Recent figures suggest a mixed picture for the sector. Residential activity has remained buoyant, with new dwelling completions up 33% year-on-year in the first quarter of 2026. Yet **wider construction output has been more uneven**, with production volumes down around 4% over the same period. Wholesale prices for construction products rose 3% year-on-year in June, while wholesale electricity prices climbed 42%.

Our own research highlights the financial implications. More than **one in three** (36%) businesses say cashflow pressure is typically worse during winter, while more than **nine in 10** (92%) are concerned about delayed customer payments affecting their business this winter.

For construction businesses, resilience is no longer just about preparing for winter. It's about understanding how operational disruption can affect cashflow, payment behaviour and financial stability across the supply chain.

Drawing on exclusive research with decision-makers across the building materials sector, alongside insight from CIF, Arcadis and Atradius, this report explores how the supply chain is preparing for the months ahead and the practical steps they can take to strengthen resilience.

Key insights

36%
of businesses say cashflow pressure is typically worse during winter

92%
are concerned about delayed customer payments affecting their business this winter

Businesses across Ireland's construction sector are well accustomed to preparing for winter. But while seasonal disruption is familiar, our research suggests today's biggest concerns increasingly lie beyond the weather itself.

More than four in five (82%) construction supplier businesses are concerned about rising energy prices over the next 12 months, while **77% are worried** about supply chain disruption and **three quarters (75%)** are concerned about the impact of geopolitical conflict. Concerns also extend to changes in national policy or legislation (84%), US tariffs (85%), cyber-attacks (81%) and labour shortages (79%), underlining the increasingly complex environment businesses are operating in.

Looking specifically at the months ahead, higher fuel or energy costs (32%) are viewed as **the biggest business risk this winter**, followed by supply chain disruption (31%), difficulty winning new contracts (28%) and delayed customer payments (25%).

These concerns are not without foundation. Recent geopolitical events – particularly the conflict in Iran – have created fresh uncertainty across global energy markets. This is against a background of already rising costs.

Although renewable energy provides a large share of Ireland's electricity supply, **more than 80%** of the country's total energy demand is imported. This leaves construction businesses exposed to rising fuel costs, transport costs and wider supply chain disruption.

The impact is not felt equally across the construction supply chain. Levels of concern about **rising energy prices** vary significantly by sector:

- **Quarrying and raw processing:** 92% are concerned, with almost half (48%) saying they're very concerned
- **Equipment providers:** 90% are concerned
- **Product manufacturers:** 77% are concerned
- **Trade retailers:** The least concerned sector surveyed, although a majority (55%) are still concerned

The findings suggest that while every part of the construction supply chain face rising costs, businesses with the greatest exposure to energy-intensive processes are anticipating the greatest pressure in the months ahead.

> Wholesale electricity prices were 42% higher in June 2026 than a year earlier, while wholesale energy fuel prices were up almost 25%
>
> **Central Statistics Office (CSO)**

Rising costs of energy

82%
concerned about rising energy prices over the next 12 months

32%
view rising energy costs as the biggest business risk this winter

25%
rise in wholesale energy prices in the last 12 months

Case study

Protecting cashflow in a high-cost sector

Western Material Supplies provide aggregates and construction materials for projects across Galway, Clare and the surrounding areas, supporting everything from housing developments and roadworks to agricultural projects and groundworks.

Operating in a sector where orders can be large and customers often buy on credit means managing financial exposure is an important part of keeping the business resilient. This becomes particularly valuable during periods of rising costs and wider uncertainty, when pressure can spread quickly across the construction supply chain.

“At Western Material Supplies, protecting cashflow is a key part of how we manage the business, particularly given the scale and credit terms involved in supplying the construction sector.”

“Credit insurance gives us an added layer of protection when extending credit to customers, while also giving us greater confidence when making commercial decisions and managing our exposure to risk.” says Robert McManus of Western Material Supplies.

For the business, access to advice and support is also an important part of managing that risk.

> “Having a dedicated contact who understands our business and is readily available when we need advice or guidance has been particularly valuable.”

Robert McManus

Director - Western Material Supplies

What is your industry doing to prepare for disruption before it happens?

Preparation for winter is already well underway across Ireland's construction sector. Almost all firms surveyed (96%) are confident in their suppliers' ability to continue delivering materials and products this winter, while 94% are equally confident in their customers' ability to maintain supply. This suggests businesses are entering the colder months with confidence in the relationships that underpin their day-to-day operations.

That confidence is being matched by practical preparation. **More than a third (36%)** of businesses have increased stock levels ahead of winter, while an equal proportion have updated their business continuity plans. **One in three (33%)** have reviewed cashflow forecasts, reflecting a growing focus on financial resilience alongside operational planning.

Many businesses are also taking steps to reduce their exposure to disruption before it occurs. Around **three in 10** have diversified their supplier base (29%), purchased or reviewed trade credit insurance (29%) or sought external advice (28%). Others have reviewed contracts (27%), assessed customer credit risk (24%) or built up cash reserves (22%) to strengthen their position ahead of the months to come.

Measure	% of businesses
Increased stock levels	36%
Updated business continuity plans	36%
Reviewed cashflow forecasts	33%
Sought external advice	28%
Reviewed contracts	27%
Reviewed customer credit risk	24%
Built up cash reserves	22%

The findings suggest that being prepared for winter is no longer limited to operational planning. Increasingly, businesses are combining practical measures on the ground with financial planning designed to improve resilience if disruption occurs.

Confidence meets caution

Nine in 10 fear payment delays

While firms are largely confident in the resilience of their supply chains, they remain acutely aware of the financial risks that periods of disruption can create. Nine in 10 (92%) businesses in building supply and services are concerned about the impact of delayed customer payments over the coming winter, making it one of the strongest concerns identified in the research.

This highlights an important distinction. Businesses may feel confident in their ability to keep materials moving and projects progressing, but they're less certain about how disruption elsewhere could affect payment behaviour and cashflow.

What are firms doing to manage payment risk?

Use trade credit insurance	% of businesses
Monitor customer payment behaviour	27%
Respond only when problems arise	25%
Assess customer creditworthiness before trading	33%
Rely on internal processes	14%
Use trade credit insurance	10%

Approaches to managing payment risk also vary across the sector. **Around a quarter** (27%) of businesses regularly monitor customer payment behaviour, while a similar proportion (25%) take a more reactive approach, responding only when problems arise. Only **a third of businesses** (33%) actively assess customer creditworthiness before trading, while 14% rely solely on internal processes and just 10% use trade credit insurance.

The findings point to a construction sector that's operationally well prepared, but increasingly aware that today's biggest risks often emerge beyond the project itself. As external uncertainty continues to grow, strengthening financial resilience is becoming just as important as maintaining operational resilience.

Case study: Creating confidence to trade at scale

RVR Energy Technology is an Irish manufacturer and supplier of heating and energy equipment for residential and commercial buildings. As a predominantly business-to-business company, the ability to offer customers competitive credit terms is an important part of its commercial model.

However, larger orders and more generous credit terms can also increase the potential impact of late payment or non-payment. RVR uses credit insurance to help balance commercial opportunity with greater control over this risk.

Desmond Flynn, General Manager at RVR Energy Technology says “Credit insurance allows us to provide more credit to our customers than if the debt was uninsured, and it gives us a clear rationale for stronger collections when we need it.”

For RVR, this means the business can support larger transactions without carrying all the associated risk itself.

“The main benefit is that it allows increased volume of trade – we can support bigger orders without carrying the risk alone,”

> “It gives us stronger leverage with debtors, as they typically understand the importance of maintaining their account terms when it’s insured by a third party.”

Desmond Flynn

General Manager, RVR Energy Technology

When disruption becomes financial risk

Few industries are as accustomed to disruption as construction. Weather delays, changing project schedules and rising costs are familiar challenges that experienced firms have learned to navigate over many years.

What has changed is the way those disruptions now spread through the wider construction supply chain. Operational challenges that once affected individual projects are increasingly being amplified by external pressures, from geopolitical uncertainty and energy market volatility to global supply chain disruption. As these pressures combine, their impact can extend far beyond the site itself – affecting suppliers, payment behaviour and ultimately cashflow.

“Strong sales do not automatically mean strong cashflow,” says Sheena Bohan, Head of Commercial at Atradius Ireland. “A business can be growing on paper while becoming more exposed if customers are taking longer to pay.

“With energy costs, supply chain disruption and wider geopolitical uncertainty adding pressure, businesses can’t afford to treat cashflow as a winter-only issue. Firms need to know who they’re trading with, spot payment problems early and stress-test how long they can operate if cash comes in later than expected.”

> “In a volatile market, protecting cashflow is just as important as winning new business.”

Sheena Bohan

Head of Commercial - Atradius Ireland

Conclusion: Looking beyond winter

This report shows that Irish construction businesses are entering the upcoming winter season with confidence. Most feel well prepared for the operational challenges the season typically brings, while many have already taken practical steps to strengthen both their operational and financial resilience.

However, it also highlights how **the nature of disruption is changing**. Rising costs, geopolitical uncertainty and increasingly interconnected supply chains mean that today's biggest risks often originate outside a business direct control. As a result, **resilience is no longer defined solely by keeping projects moving**. It also depends on understanding how disruption can affect customers, suppliers, payment behaviour and ultimately cashflow.

Andrew Brownlee, Chief Executive Officer at the Construction Industry Federation (CIF), says: "While the sector always anticipates a degree of disruption over the winter months, the research from Atradius highlights the potential impact that the events of 2026 could have on firms' trading.

"Cost pressures are already being felt across the industry, with CIF research showing that 54% of construction firms reported an increase in project pricing in Q4 2025.

"More than ever, it's crucial for firms to consider risks beyond weather-related challenges this winter and put measures in place accordingly."

The findings throughout this report point to one clear conclusion: while businesses can't control the weather, global events or changing market conditions, they can **control how prepared they are to respond**. Those that combine strong operational planning with greater visibility of financial risk will be better placed to protect cashflow, strengthen trading relationships and navigate uncertainty with confidence – not just this winter, but in the years ahead.

About Atradius

Atradius is a global provider of credit insurance, bond and surety, collections and information services, with a strategic presence in more than 50 countries. The products offered by Atradius protect companies around the world against the default risks associated with selling goods and services on credit.

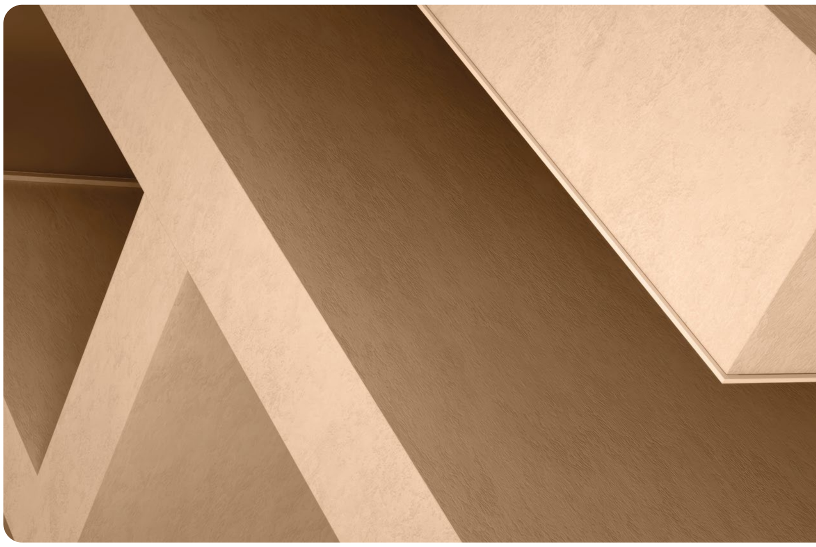
Atradius is a member of Grupo Catalana Occidente (GCO.MC), one of the largest insurers in Spain and one of the largest credit insurers in the world.

Our core strategy is to help our customers thrive in changing or challenging conditions – much as businesses like yours are currently experiencing. Our credit insurance enables companies to trade with confidence and explore new markets or products, knowing they're protected against non-payment, and credit risk such as the insolvency of their customers.

> "More than ever, it's crucial for firms to consider risks beyond weather-related challenges this winter and put measures in place accordingly."

Andrew Brownlee

Chief Executive Office - Construction Industry Federation



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