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Institute of Building

Attitudes Towards Construction Careers

A Chartered Institute of Building (CIOB) survey of young people and parents' attitudes, perceptions and views towards construction careers in 2025.



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About us

We are the Chartered Institute of Building (CIOB),
and we stand for the science, ethics and practice of
built environments across the world. Everything we
do is to improve the quality of life for those using
and creating the built environment.

We have a role in the management, leadership,
education and development of our industry, guiding
and educating our members as they embark on
their careers.

Using both the cutting edge of technology and the
foundation of hard-earned experience, we train the
construction experts of the future. From tools and
data for the day-to-day, to degree qualifications for
investing in a career. We train and shape workers
and organisations who make our industry what it is.

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Key Survey Results

Attitudes of Young People Aged 16 – 24	Attitudes of Parents with Children Aged 16 – 24
68% have a positive view on careers in the construction sector	65% have a positive view on careers in the construction sector
31% are likely to consider pursuing a career in the construction sector	79% would be supportive of their child pursuing a career in the construction sector
47% agree construction careers were not covered in careers advice they received whilst in education	42% would be likely to recommend a career in construction to their children
31% agree the construction sector does not have good career opportunities	18% agree the construction sector does not have good career opportunities
35% agree construction has a poor workplace culture	25% agree construction has a poor workplace culture
36% agree construction is not a well-respected career path	21% agree construction is not a well-respected career path
53% agree construction is not a welcoming sector for women to work in	11% agree construction is an unprofessional sector to work in
24% agree construction is an unprofessional sector to work in	64% would have encouraged their child taking a GCSE subject in the built environment
53% would have been interested in taking a GCSE subject in the built environment	





Introduction

This research investigates the attitudes, perceptions, and views towards construction careers through a survey of 2,001 young people (aged 16-24) and 2,000 parents (with children aged 16-24) across the UK.

By surveying these two groups, this study seeks to identify key attitudes and perceptions that currently shape young people's interest in entering a career in the construction sector.

The construction sector is a major sector for employment, with a workforce of 2.14 million people in the UK.¹ However, the sector faces an ongoing skills shortage and need for an increased pipeline of skilled workers joining the industry. In 2025 and beyond, the construction skills gap is only due to grow with the UK Government's significant ambition for a national programme of building, which ranges from the construction of 1.5 million new homes in England, including a number of new towns, to a number of energy and transport infrastructure projects. It is therefore paramount to understand young people's attitude towards construction careers as they enter the workforce, as well as this generation's parents who often have influence on their children's career-making decisions.

This study examines a range of different attitudes towards construction careers, including how positively careers in the sector are viewed, to what extent people currently agree with longstanding perceptions of the sector, and what areas of the industry young people may be most interested in working in. The survey assesses the extent that young people would be interested in working in the construction sector, and the likelihood parents would support their children to work in construction.

The research also gauges the most significant sources of influence on young people's careers choices, to understand where measures aimed at raising awareness of construction careers should be targeted.

The objective of this report is to contribute to the ongoing conversation about improving the awareness of different careers in construction and to help provide an evidence base for new initiatives targeted at recruiting more young people.

Understanding the current views of both young people and parents towards the construction sector is an essential step in creating effective interventions to build interest in construction careers amongst those entering the workforce. The results will offer relevant insight for various stakeholders across government, education providers, and the construction sector, all of whom are working to address the current skills shortage and develop strategies to attract the future workforce.

Background on the Construction Skills Gap

Attracting young people to enter a career in construction continues to be a long-standing challenge for the sector.

The latest iteration of the Construction Industry Training Board's (CITB) Industry Outlook 2024-2028 forecasts that 251,500 extra workers will be required to meet UK construction output by 2028. That is 50,300 per year.²

The scale of the recruitment challenge cannot be underestimated, and skills shortages are prevalent not only in manual occupations – such as labourers, carpenters and joiners – but also in non-manual and professional and technical occupations, such as architects, construction project managers, and surveyors.

It must be stated the figures from the CITB's latest Industry Outlook pre-dates the last UK General Election in July 2024 which brought a change in Government. Since its election, the new Labour Government has committed to accelerating housebuilding and delivering over 1.5 million homes over the course of this Parliament – or by August 2029 at the latest.

Further to this, the Government has also made several other announcements in scaling up funding for infrastructure, such as £2.7 billion of funding to continue the Sizewell C nuclear development through 2025-26 and £1.4 billion for the school rebuilding programme.

These ambitious targets mean the demand for skills is likely to be even more pressing and further highlight the scale of the recruitment challenge for construction.

Historical Overview and the Current Challenge

Construction skills shortages are not a recent phenomenon.

The CITB was set-up in 1964 to build a safe, professional, and fully qualified construction industry, and was one of 21 industrial training boards established in the wake of the Industrial Training Act 1964, primarily to address concerns about UK skills shortages.

The CITB is now one of only two industrial training boards left in the UK, alongside the Engineering Construction Industry Training Board (ECITB). The CITB collects the industry levy: a fee paid by employers and contractors in the construction industry, which leads to funding, training, grants and promoting careers.

With construction being a cyclical boom and bust industry, it means workloads and staffing requirements are often dictated by the general condition of the economy. CITB seeks to assist in filling that void through funding and training.

Despite this, the construction sector, and wider built environment, has consistently struggled to recruit the numbers required to maintain or grow its output. A recent survey by the British Chambers of Commerce states construction and engineering firms continue to struggle the most finding staff, with 83% reporting recruitment issues in Q4 2024.³

The recruitment challenge is compounded with long-standing fears about the numbers of workers set to retire. This was historically mitigated by a high level of migrant labour. Migration provided vital flexibility within the labour force, helping facilitate rapid growth and reduced the cost to the construction industry of carrying a reserve group of workers.

Following the 2016 EU referendum, there was a significant amount of skilled labour deterred from coming to the UK and numerous European construction workers returned to their home nations. Between Quarter 4 2019 and Quarter 4 2023, the industry lost around 14% of its UK-born workforce. In addition, three-quarters of EU construction workers lost due to post-Brexit restrictions were aged between 25 and 39.⁴

Brexit presented a unique opportunity to create an overarching ambition to attract, train, and retain a greater domestic workforce, with skills aligned to a more modern ways of working. However, regulatory changes and skills plans have often merely tinkered around the edges, rather than act as a targeted campaign to get new people into the sector and better utilise those close to retirement age.

Perceptions About the Construction Industry and Careers Advice

Construction is an apprentice-reliant industry, and this is perhaps where some social stigmas and negative perceptions about careers in the construction industry stem from.

There has long been a social stigma attached to apprenticeships which have been seen as inferior to university degree programmes. There are perceptions apprenticeships are for those who did not achieve the grades required to get into university and, as the above statement suggests, this is a view shared amongst young people, friendship groups, parents, and teachers.

Further to this, there have been misconceptions that apprenticeships involve low pay, long hours and are only for 'hands-on' jobs such as bricklaying or car mechanics, as they were in the past.⁵

These misconceptions and perceptions about the construction sector, as well as apprenticeships and vocational training, can be dated back to the abolishment of national Connexions service back in 2012. Many young people lost centres of expertise where they could obtain face to face guidance and support on careers choices. The National Careers Service that replaced Connexions centres in many towns and cities meant the local interface was lost. This resulted in the onus being placed on schools and teaching staff to deliver independent careers guidance with little or no extra funding or training.

Many teaching staff, despite their best intentions, often lack the necessary expertise and resources to help young people make informed career choices. This can lead to partial advice and bias towards 'tried and tested routes', such as higher-level education. Separately, many young people also seek advice from their parents and family members, something which will be explored more within this survey.

The wider construction sector has made strides to improving its image in recent years, whether that is through advice and guidance initiatives such as [Go Construct](#), [Open Doors](#), or through becoming more tech-focused and professionalised. However, the numbers entering the sector still fall significantly short of those needed to deliver the scale of work that the industry, and Government, is demanding.

Diversity in the Construction Industry

Diversity in the workforce is a key issue for construction, reflecting a broader societal focus on diversity, equality and inclusion (EDI) in workplaces across all sectors. The UK construction sector has long struggled with a lack of diversity in its workforce, and has been predominantly made up of male workers across both skilled trades and managerial roles in the sector, which has contributed to the growing construction skills gap.

The construction industry has a strong record of inclusion in respect of certain groups, with the vocational nature of routes to the industry meaning that the sector has historically been seen as accessible to those from working class backgrounds. There is also high level of neurodiversity in the sector, with one in four construction workers considering themselves neurodiverse.⁶ Another group the sector has taken steps to be inclusive towards is people with criminal records, for which many construction companies now have dedicated programmes for hiring.⁷

However, the construction workforces' predominant make up of male workers has still resulted in underrepresentation of women, ethnic minorities, and other large groups of the population. Women only make up 15% of the construction sector's workforce and people from minority ethnic backgrounds make up 6%.⁸ Whilst there is a very low level of gender diversity in skilled construction trades, the diversity challenge is exacerbated by a lack of women in construction management. This gender gap has been driven by societal perceptions around gender roles and jobs involving physical labour but has been compounded by a non-inclusive workplace culture for women in many corners of the construction industry.

Whilst there are ethical concerns presented by non-inclusive workplace practices, the lack of diversity and inclusion in the sector has also contributed to the growing construction skills gap, as a non-inclusive workplace culture presents challenges in both attracting and retaining workers. As a result, addressing the lack of diversity in the construction sector leaves significant opportunity to access a wider talent pool and increase the number of workers joining the sector.

There are steps being taken to improve diversity and inclusion in areas of the industry. For example, large contractors in the sector will frequently have dedicated programmes and initiatives to make their workplaces more inclusive and attract a wider range of talent. There have also been calls in recent years for industry stakeholders to take action in making the construction workplace more inclusive, such as the CIOB's PPE that fits campaign, which has called for construction

companies to provide appropriate Personal Protective Equipment that fits all shapes, sizes and genders.⁹ However, there is still recognition about the opportunities to make the construction sector more diverse and inclusive towards people of all demographics.

Current Skills Policy Landscape for Construction

With a relatively new UK Government, there are reforms in the pipeline related to construction skills and the wider skills policy landscape. This includes the introduction of a new government body, Skills England, to oversee skills development of the workforce across all sectors in England. Skills England has already recognised construction as a key sector that requires an improved skills pipeline to meet the Government's economic objectives, and the UK Government has pledged to set out a sector-specific plan for developing the construction workforce.

As of January 2025, the Government published the latest Industrial Training Board Review with 17 overarching strategic and tactical/operational recommendations,¹⁰ including merging the CITB and ECITB to form a single body to be able to meet the construction sector's specialist skills needs.

The review states intervention is still needed in both the construction and engineering sectors in response to an ongoing market failure in propensity to invest in the workforce. It also calls for the levy grant system to be 'modernised' and retained.

This 'modernisation' is linked to maximising outcomes from the levy system, ensuring it deals with industry challenges and supports employers more effectively in the current economy.

The Department for Education has also published its response to the far-ranging review, confirming its intention to keep ITBs and the levy-grant systems; but ensure more measurable outcomes are included as part of its three-year strategy.¹¹

Separately, the Government has also made a number of recent announcements about intentions to boost apprenticeship delivery for construction. This comes in the form of plans to invest £140m to create 5,000 more construction apprenticeships through 32 new Homebuilding Skills Hubs in areas that need more housing to train people in trades such as bricklayers, roofers, plasters, scaffolders, electricians and carpenters.¹² Alongside this, there are further intentions to reform apprenticeships and to cut the minimum duration of apprenticeships from 12 to 8 months – however, these changes will only apply to certain trades as higher-level apprenticeships typically take longer to complete.

It is too early to tell whether the latest set of reforms will have a positive effect on the number of young people joining the construction sector or undertaking apprenticeships, and there is ambiguity around how the future skills policy landscape for construction amongst other sectors will be shaped. However, the purpose of this survey is to understand whether perceptions about, and awareness of, careers in the construction sector are still one of the main barriers to entry.

Survey Methodology & Sample

CIOB commissioned [Opinion Matters](#) to carry out polling of 2,000 UK parents, aged 31+, with children aged 16-24 years old and 2,001 UK young people aged 16-24 to understand their perceptions towards careers in construction.

The parents' data was collected between 4 February 2025 and 10 February 2025. The young people data was collected between 4 February 2025 and 7 February 2025.

[Opinion Matters](#) abides by and employs members of the [Market Research Society \(MRS\)](#) and follows the MRS code of conduct and [ESOMAR](#) principles. Opinion Matters is also a member of the [British Polling Council \(BPC\)](#).

Parents' Survey Demographics

The sample was carried out by 1,242 females, 757 males and one choosing other or preferring not to say. 408 respondents were in the 31-44 age bracket, 1,097 in the 45-54 age bracket and 495 aged 55 and over. Responses were gathered from all English regions, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales.

Young People Survey Demographics

The sample was carried out by 1,287 females, 693 males and 21 choosing other or preferring not to say. 945 respondents were in the 16-20 age bracket and 1,056 in the 21-24 age bracket. Responses were gathered from all regions of the UK.

Limitations of Survey

When interpreting this data, it must be noted a significantly higher proportion of the respondents were female compared to male, and as such there is a significant skew towards female response in the survey results. To address this bias, the disaggregated data for both males and females are provided for many of the statistics throughout this report.

Furthermore, the survey results do not account for response bias, for example, where some respondents may feel unable to express negative perceptions of the construction industry due to social pressures, which could compromise accuracy in some areas of the survey results.

These limitations must be acknowledged when interpreting the survey results contained in this report.

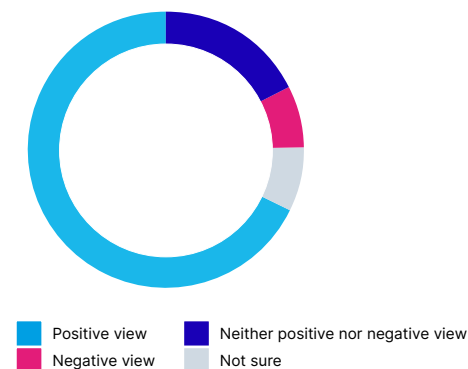
The raw data from this survey is available on request. Please contact policy@ciob.org.uk

Survey Results and Analysis

Young People's Attitude to Construction Careers

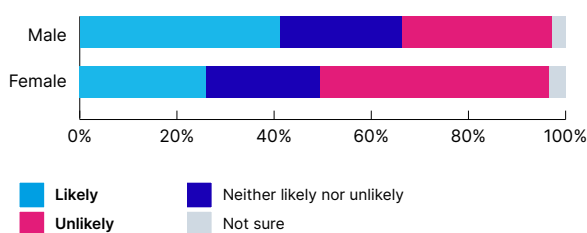
The majority of young people aged 16-24 report holding a positive view towards a career in the construction sector (68%). This overall positive attitude of young people towards careers in the construction sector is highly encouraging considering the long-standing concern that construction jobs are viewed in a poor light.

CHART A
Overall positivity of young people's perception of construction careers



- 68% of young people aged 16-24 reported holding a positive view towards a career in the construction sector, and only 7% reported a negative view.
- Young males held a more positive view towards careers in the construction the sector than young females (74% vs 65%).
- 31% of young people surveyed said they were likely to pursue a career in the construction sector, with 42% reporting they are unlikely.

CHART B
Likelihood of young people pursuing a career in the construction sector, by gender



As shown in **CHART B**, young men are more likely to consider pursuing a career in construction than young women, with 41% of males likely to pursue a career in the sector compared to 26% of females. This is an expected result given the low level of gender diversity in the sector.

The data perhaps suggests a significant number of young people are currently interested in pursuing careers in the construction sector (31%). However, the number of young people likely to pursue a career in the sector was higher than

expected, given the ongoing sector skills gap and wider concerns many young people are not interested in working in the industry. It would therefore be beneficial to further explore the proportion of young people likely to consider working in the sector and the reasons why many are currently likely to consider construction careers.

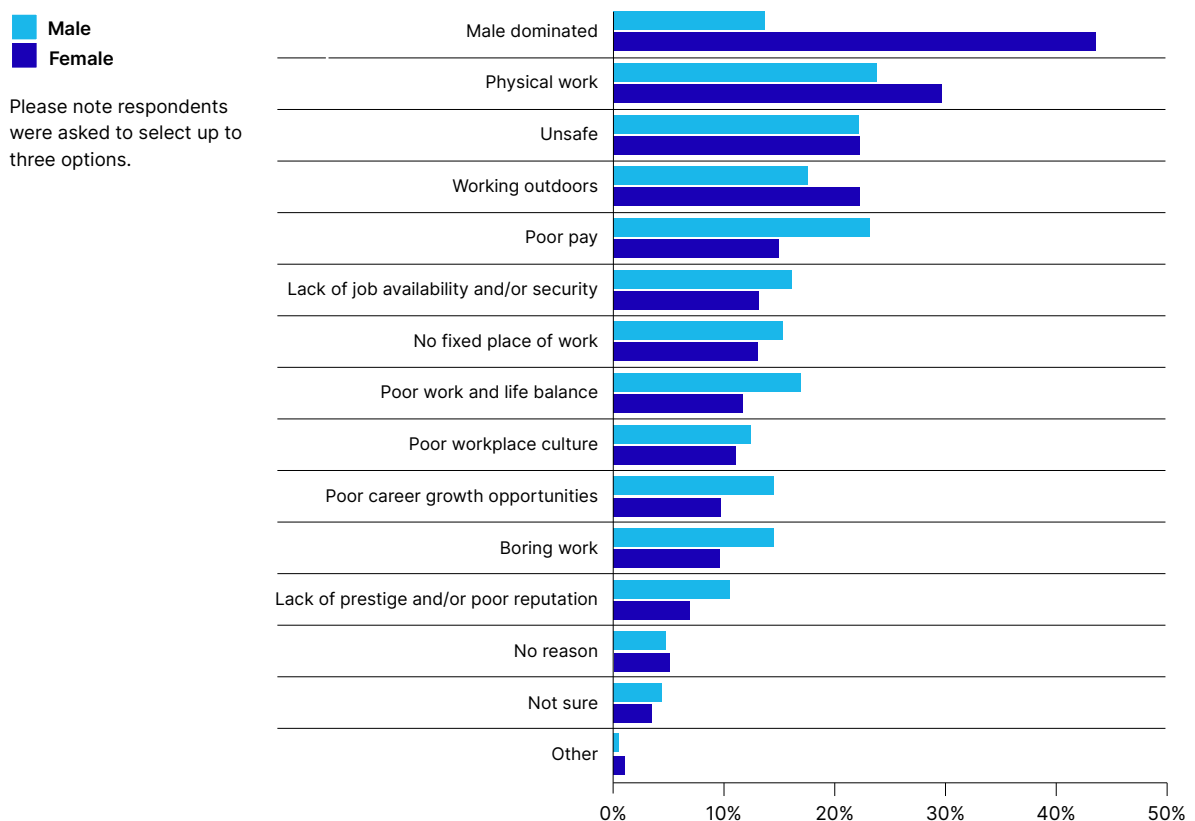
Respondents aged 21-24 had both a slightly more positive view and a greater likelihood of joining the sector (35%) than those aged 16-20 (26%), suggesting a need to ensure accessible routes for this age group who are not directly school leavers.

Young people were asked the main reasons why they would not pursue a career in construction, with the following reasons why they would not pursue a career in the sector most frequently selected: construction careers are 'male dominated', involve 'physical work', are 'unsafe', involve 'working outdoors', and have 'poor pay'.

Whilst these reasons are based on common perceptions of working in construction that are true in many instances, construction is a diverse sector with many roles that are office-based as well as site-based, and overall construction workers enjoy a higher salary compared with the national average.¹³ Therefore, there is opportunity to improve awareness of the nature of working in construction and the diversity of the sector to potentially attract new workers.

However, the reasons for not pursuing construction careers varied greatly by gender, as shown in **CHART C**. For males, the most common reasons given were: the sector has physical work, is unsafe, and has poor pay. For females, the most common reasons were: the sector is male dominated, involves physical work, is unsafe, and involves working outdoors.

CHART C
Predominant reasons why young people would not pursue a career in the construction sector, by gender



Young People’s Perceptions of the Construction Sector

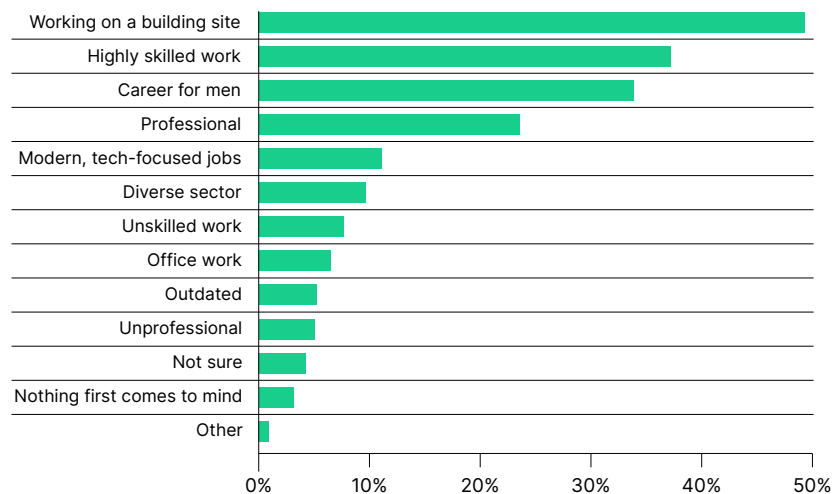
There are many common societal perceptions about working in construction that, whilst true in many cases, do not reflect the full extent of an industry that offers a significant variety of distinct career pathways. It is therefore essential to understand the current generation of young adults’ central perceptions and ideas of construction careers.

When asked to think about careers in construction, young people most frequently responded that the first thing that comes to mind was ‘working on a building site’, followed by ‘highly skilled work’, a ‘career for men’, and ‘professional’, in decreasing order of frequency.

CHART D

Perceptions that first come to mind when young people think about careers in the construction sector

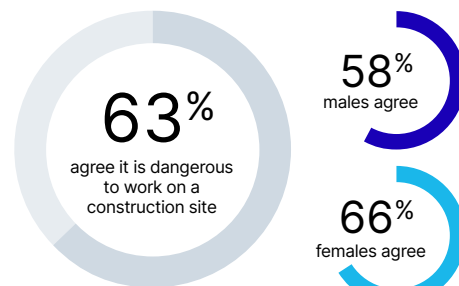
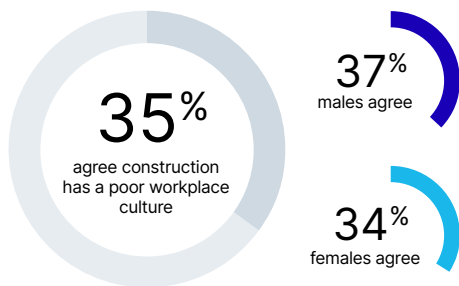
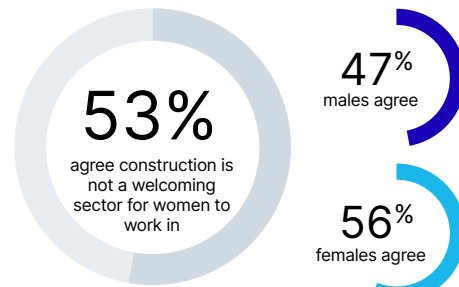
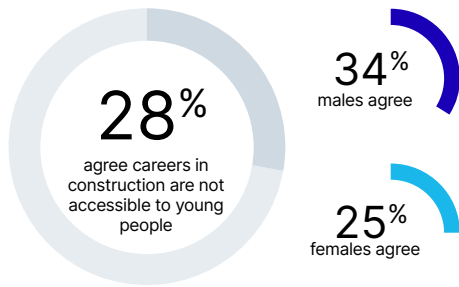
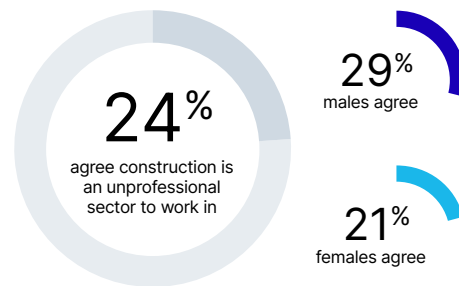
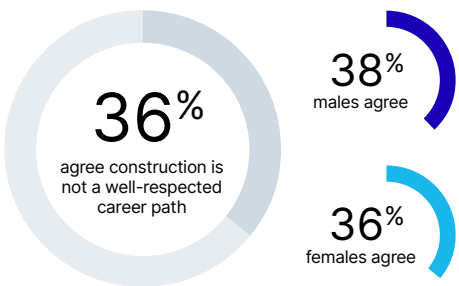
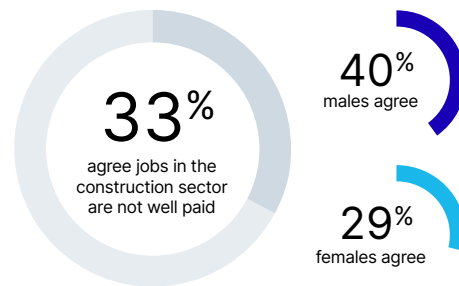
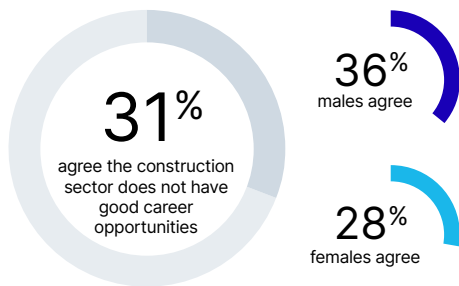
Please note respondents were asked to select up to three options.



It is encouraging to understand that many respondents view construction jobs as highly skilled and professional. It is also positive to see that more than one in ten people strongly associate construction with modern, tech-focused jobs, reflecting the increasing adoption of new technologies

across much of the sector. It is discouraging to see many young people first think of construction careers as option for men, but this is an understandable result given the longstanding low level of gender diversity in the sector, particularly ‘on-site’ work.

Respondents were asked whether they agree with a common set of negative views and beliefs that are frequently expressed about construction careers, as shown below.



There were two negative perceptions of the industry with which the majority of young people agreed: that construction is not a welcoming sector for women, and it is dangerous to work on a construction site. For both perceptions on working in the construction industry, it is reasonable to hold some concern. As aforementioned, only 15% of the construction workforce is female, of which only 2% work 'on-site', which creates challenges for making the sector an inclusive place for women to work. However, in recent years there has been a growing attention to this matter and increased steps are being taken to make the sector more inclusive for women.

Furthermore, working on a construction site has inherent health and safety risks due to the nature of the work, such as working with heavy machinery and working at height. As a result, the construction sector had the most workplace deaths in the UK compared to other sectors, with 51 fatal injuries to workers in 2023/24.¹⁴ Although health and safety processes and procedures have improved over the last two decades, there are still justifiable concerns around the safety of workers and the public. Furthermore, while strides have been made in safety, we wish to see further progress on workplace illness, mental health, and ensuring appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) is provided that fits the wearer properly, regardless of their gender, culture, religion, size or shape, is safe, and compliant with health and safety regulations.¹⁵

Young women were more likely to believe that construction is not a welcoming sector for women, and it is dangerous to work on a construction site compared to young men. However, young men indicated a slightly more negative view of career opportunities in the construction industry than young women, as they were more likely to agree a career in construction is unprofessional, does not have good career opportunities, has poor pay, and is not accessible to young people.

Whilst only a minority of respondents agreed with some of the negative perceptions, there is still a significant opportunity to challenge misconceptions about the industry. With a third of respondents agreeing that construction careers are not well paid, further awareness can be raised of the high level of pay offered in the sector. CIOB research has shown that the construction workforce benefits from higher average pay compared to other sectors. In 2022, average earnings in construction were around £36,000 compared to £33,00 across all other sectors and, while average earnings across all sectors rose by 15% between 2012 and 2022, the rise for full-time construction workers was significantly higher at around 24%.¹⁶

The data suggests there could be further awareness raising on the diverse range of skilled career pathways in the construction industry, with a third of young people agreeing that the sector does not offer good career opportunities. It would also be beneficial to further explore why a third of young people do not view careers in construction as accessible.

Sources of Influence on Young People’s Career Choices in Construction

When asked who had the most influence on their career choices overall, young people reported family had the greatest influence on their decision-making, followed by friends, social media, and schools.

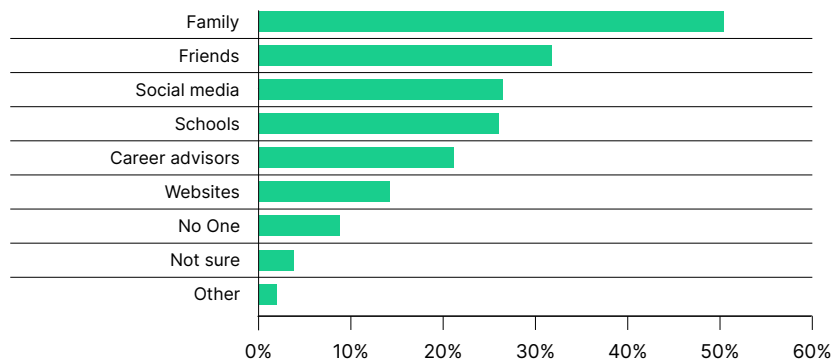
It is indicated that social media has a higher level of influence than websites, as well as careers advisors, on this age group’s careers choices (**CHART E**). This suggests a changing source of influence on career decision making compared to previous generations that should be considered when raising awareness of construction careers.

When asked who shaped their view on construction careers specifically, respondents said their views on construction careers are most influenced by their parents, friends and people they know working in the construction sector (**CHART F**). These groups

had a higher level of influence than teachers, careers advisors and employers at careers events, suggesting the views of young people towards construction careers tend to be shaped more through anecdotal advice and the experiences of people they know, rather than through more formal discussions about their future careers. As will be discussed later in this report, the lack of influence of teachers and careers advisors may be the case as many of the young people surveyed indicated they received no careers advice on construction at all during their time in education.

CHART E
Most significant sources of influence on young people’s career choices

Please note respondents were asked to select up to three options.





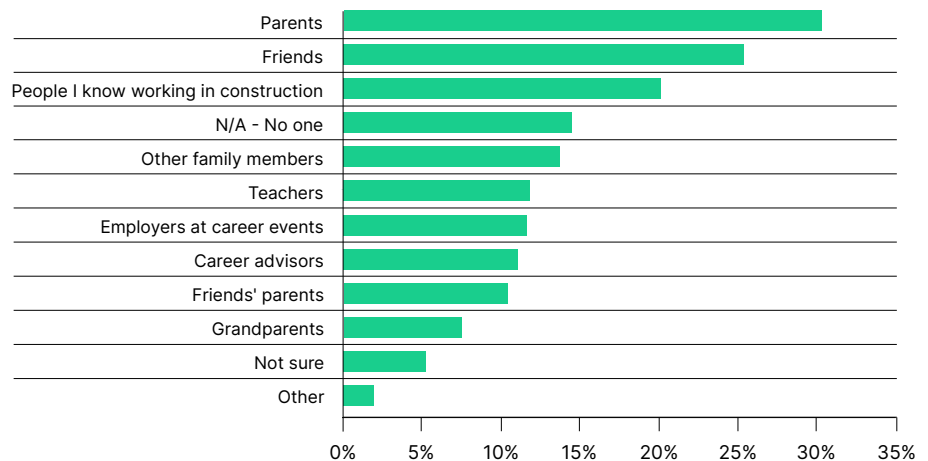
A high level of parental influence on career decision-making is also perceived by parents themselves, with 25% of parents with children aged 16-24 years old stating they have more influence on their child's career choice than they would like. Moreover, 39% of parents reported having a high level of discussion with their child

on their future career options, and a further 50% reported a mid-level of discussion. The high level of parental influence on young people's careers choices suggests that parental perceptions and knowledge of construction careers are key to influencing more young people to pursue jobs in the sector.

CHART F

Most significant sources of influence on young people's view of construction careers

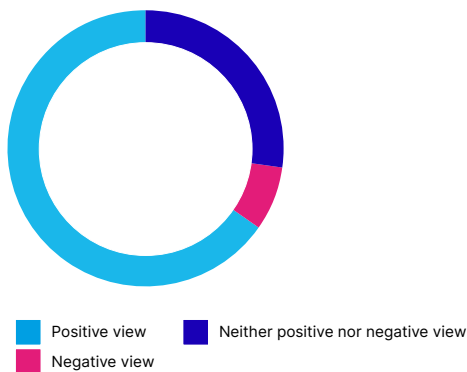
Please note respondents were asked to select up to three options.



Parental Perceptions of Construction Careers

As the survey of young people suggests parents have the greatest influence on their career choices, it is also key to understand the perception of parents towards their children pursuing construction careers.

CHART G
Overall positivity of parents' perception of construction careers



Parents were significantly more likely to have a positive view of construction careers than negative. As shown in **CHART G**, 65% of parents surveyed have a positive view on careers in the construction sector, only 7% had a negative view. More male parents held a positive view on construction careers than female parents. Parents were also asked whether they agree with a common set of views and beliefs that are frequently expressed about construction careers, as shown above.

Parents overall held more positive perceptions towards the construction industry compared to young people, with most parents holding positive perceptions that the construction sector offers good, accessible, and professional career opportunities.

It was encouraging to see only 11% of parents agree that construction is an unprofessional sector to work in. The construction sector is subject to a range of negative societal

perceptions that contribute to a view of the sector being unprofessional, such as inconsistent standards of work and the stereotype that construction jobs are for those that performed poorly at school. It should also be noted that the term 'professional' is sometimes used to focus on broader built environment occupations such as architecture, surveying or civil engineering as opposed to 'trade' or 'craft' workers, such as bricklayers, electricians or plumbers.

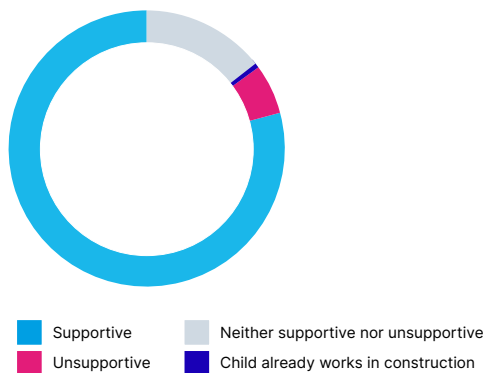
18% agree the construction sector does not have good career opportunities	54% disagree
49% agree it is dangerous to work on a construction site	22% disagree
21% agree construction is not a well-respected career path	52% disagree
43% agree construction is not a welcoming sector for women to work in	28% disagree
25% agree construction has a poor workplace culture	35% disagree
14% agree careers in construction are not accessible to young people	56% disagree
11% agree construction is an unprofessional sector to work in	68% disagree

However, many parents recognised challenges frequently faced in construction, particularly that there are inherent health and safety risks to working on a construction site and the construction sector has a reputation for having a poor level of diversity and inclusion for women. However, parents held these concerns to a lesser extent than the cohort of young people surveyed.

Parental Attitude to their Child Pursuing a Construction Career

Whilst parents expressed an overall positive perception of construction, it is helpful to understand if this attitude translates towards the prospect of their own children pursuing construction careers. Encouragingly, the parents surveyed expressed a highly positive and supportive view overall towards their child potentially working in construction.

CHART H
Parents' supportiveness if their child were to pursue a career in construction



The survey results demonstrate a high level of openness amongst parents towards their children pursuing construction careers:

- 79% of parents agree they would be supportive of their child pursuing a career in the construction sector, and only 6% would be unsupportive (as shown in **CHART H**).
- Only 8% of parents agree they would be embarrassed if their child pursued a career in construction, whilst 79% disagree.
- When asked what sectors the parent most want their child to work in, construction was the third most popular option (22%), only behind computing

and technology (30%), and business and finance (23%).

The reasons why parents are supportive to this extent would benefit from further investigation, although it is likely that parents in most instances would support their child's career choices, regardless of the sector.

One potential reason is that numerous construction roles can offer relatively high wages without requiring a university degree. These perceived financial advantages can be seen with 43% of parents surveyed agreeing that they would rather their child 'earn while they learn' instead of going to university (with 21% disagreeing). This suggests that parents would overall have a strong preference for their child going down a vocational education route when pursuing their chosen career.

This is not surprising in the current economic climate with universities now able to charge up to £9,250 a year for tuition fees alone.

Additionally, parents think it will cost them on average almost £40,000 to support their child through university, despite having only put aside £11,000 in savings, according to Aviva research.¹⁸

Though the majority of parents responding to the survey had said they had a positive view of construction careers and would be supportive of their child pursuing a career in the sector, this does not translate into many parents actively recommending such a career to their own child.

Only 42% of parents said they are likely to recommend a construction career to their child, and 24% said they are unlikely to recommend such a career.

Of the parents unlikely to recommend a career in construction, the main reasons they were unlikely to recommend these careers is that they involve 'physical work', are 'male dominated', involve 'working outdoors', are 'unsafe', and have 'poor pay' (in decreasing order of frequency). These reasons why parents would not recommend a career in construction closely matched the

reasons why young people said they would not pursue a career in the sector.

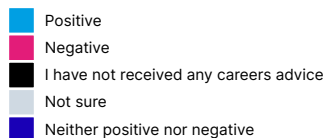
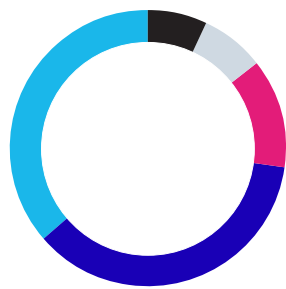
Though most parents reported that they would be supportive of their children pursuing careers in construction, young people did not always view this as the case. 29% of young people agreed their parents would not support a career in construction, though a higher percentage of young men held this view (32%). Moreover, 25% of young people agreed their parents would be embarrassed if they pursued a career in construction, with again a higher rate of young men holding this view (29%).



Careers Advice on Construction

Careers advice is a more formal lever to inform young people of their options for different career paths. As alluded to earlier in this report, careers advice and guidance vary greatly between schools. Whilst advice and guidance may be well intentioned, those providing the advice may lack the knowledge and understanding of all options available to young people across different industries.

CHART I
Young people's perception of whether construction careers were portrayed positively or negatively by careers advisors



Within this survey, we asked young people whether construction careers were covered in the careers advice they received during their time in education:

- Nearly half (47%) of all young people surveyed agreed that construction careers were not covered in the careers advice they received.
- The proportion of young men and young women who agreed construction had not been covered in careers advice was comparatively similar (46% and 48% respectively).

This result means a large pool of potential talent is not receiving any formal information about careers in the construction sector. Whilst we cannot speculate whether this advice would have a strong bearing on young people's career decisions, there is a strong case to provide more information at this key stage given the significant career opportunities that exist in the construction sector and wider built environment.

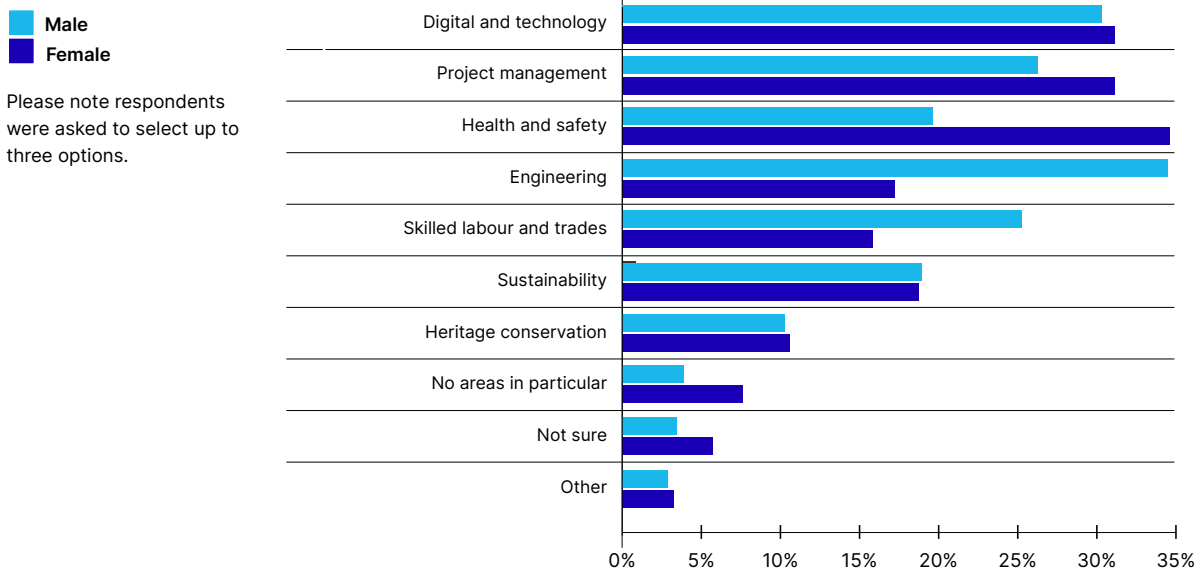
Of those who expressed construction was covered to some extent in careers advice they received, 36% said construction careers were portrayed positively by careers advisors, as shown in **CHART I**. Conversely, 13% of young people said these careers were portrayed negatively. Whilst this is only a small proportion of those who received advice on construction careers, it is still discouraging to see more than one in 10 have such careers portrayed negatively, as there are erroneous perceptions that construction is a low-skilled and low-paid career choice.

Young People's Career Preferences

Respondents were also asked to select three areas of work they were most interested in working in from a selection of areas that feature in various careers. The most popular areas young people chose were **digital and technology, project management, and health and safety.**

CHART J

Areas of work that young people would be most interested in, by gender

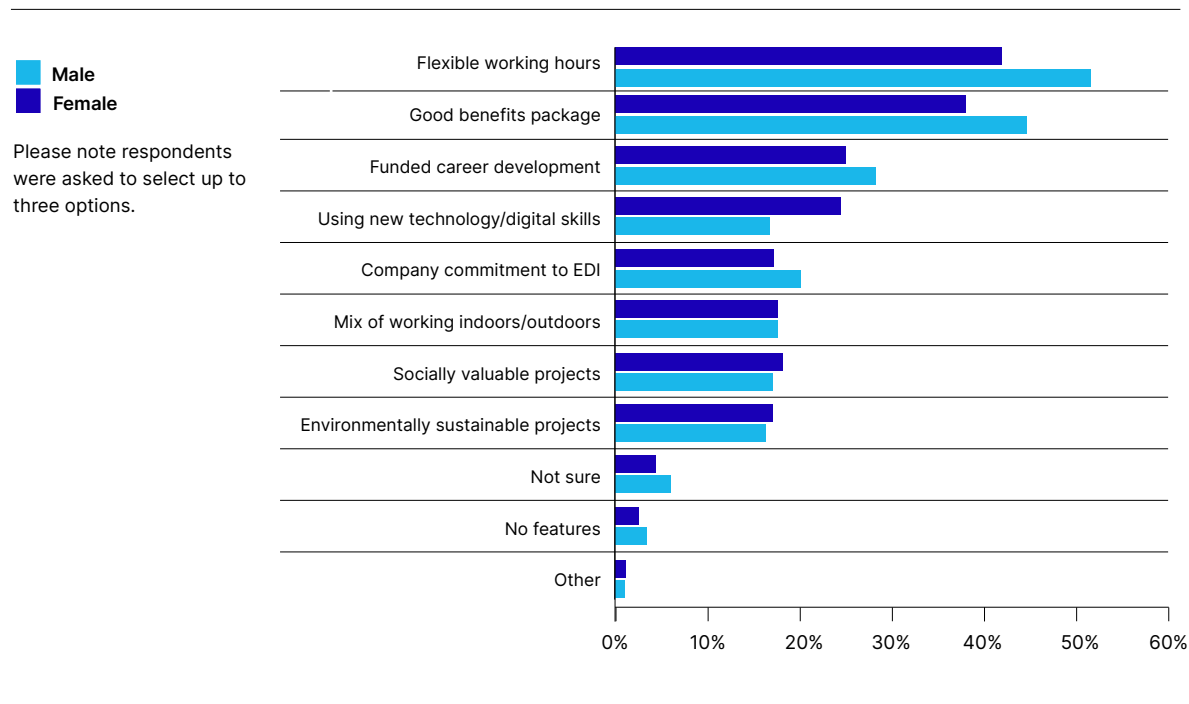


As shown in **CHART J**, the areas of work that young people were most interested in varied significantly by gender. The most interesting areas for young men were engineering, digital and technology, and project management. For young women, health and safety, project management, and digital and technology, were the areas of the most interest.

The areas identified are broadly aligned to many of the roles performed by construction management professionals. It could therefore be beneficial to focus on these career paths when promoting construction careers to young men and women.

CHART K

Job features that would make young people most likely to apply to a role, by gender



When offered a set of options of what features offered by an employer would make them most likely to apply for a job, young people reported flexible working hours, a good benefits package, and career development paid for by an employer were the most attractive features in a role, in descending popularity.

As shown in **CHART K**, the top three features were the same for both males and females, though 53% of young women chose flexible working hours compared to 42% of young men. Whilst flexible working hours can be more challenging to offer in many construction jobs compared to other sectors, for reasons such as managing health and safety risks, there are areas of the sector that have looked to feasibly adopt flexible working in roles, which may be key to attracting new talent to the

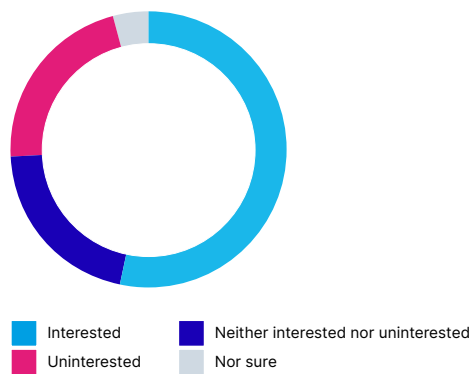
sector - particularly young women. There have also been several pilot projects to demonstrate how flexible working can be implemented on construction sites, without negatively affecting budgets or delivery. The results have proved that flexibility can be implemented successfully, despite the sector's significant operational barriers.¹³

Similar to preferences expressed by those surveyed aged 16-24, parents chose the following features they think their children would consider as most important when choosing a role: good benefits package, career development paid by employers, and flexible working hours, in order of decreasing frequency.

Interest in a Built Environment GCSE

A step to encourage a larger and wider range of people to choose careers in construction, offering courses on the built environment as part of the secondary school curriculum can help introduce young people to the concepts, knowledge, and skills involved in many construction careers. Though an optional GCSE subject in the Built Environment was introduced in Northern Ireland in 2017 and Wales in 2021, such a qualification is not currently offered in England.

CHART L
Percentage of young people interested in taking a gcse in the built environment

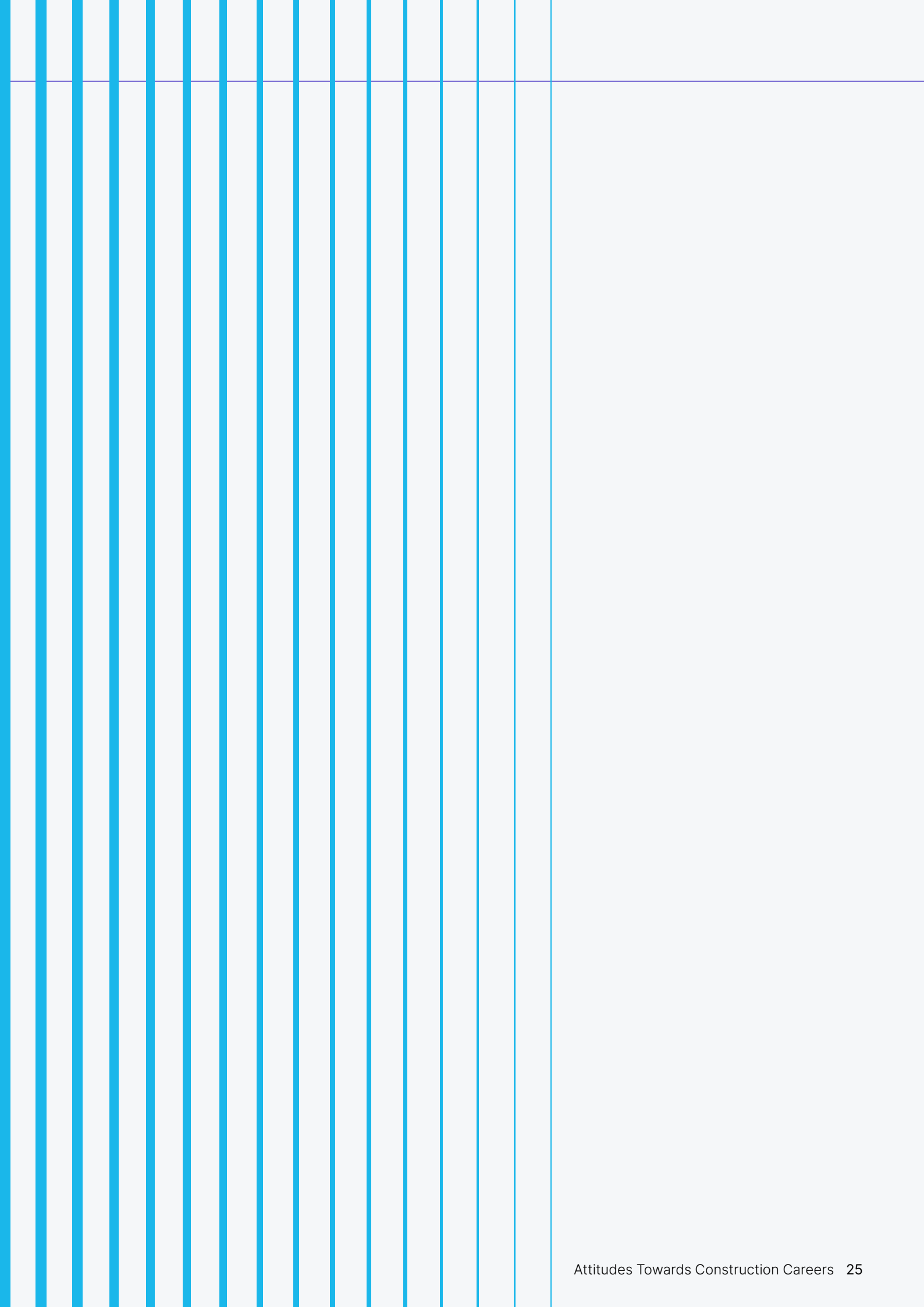


The survey asked both young people about their level of interest in a GCSE for the built environment if such a qualification was offered to them. Of the young people surveyed, **53% of respondents stated they would be interested in taking a GCSE for the built environment.** Male respondents were overall more interested than their female counterparts (59% vs 51%).

A similar question was posed towards parents, asking whether they would encourage or discourage their child from taking a GCSE for the built environment. Positively, 64% of parents would have encouraged their child to take a GCSE in this subject, compared to only 4% that would have discouraged their child.

These results indicate that formally adding optional qualifications on the built environment at GCSE level could be a potentially valuable and impactful measure to increase young people's awareness of the construction sector.

We have discussed what a GCSE for the built environment could look like on [page 31](#).



Summary

This survey reveals a largely positive attitude towards construction careers amongst both young people and parents, with a significant number of the former likely to consider pursuing a career in the sector. Parents showed particularly strong support for their children potentially pursuing construction careers, with the majority of parents believing the construction sector offers good, accessible and professional career opportunities. This positive attitude is key as young people indicate that their parents and family have the strongest influence on their career decision-making.

However, certain perceptions such as the belief that construction careers are physically demanding, are unsafe, and poorly compensated remain preventative barriers to young people joining the sector. Whilst these beliefs are valid in some cases, the construction sector offers a diverse range of roles, including with the majority offering pay above the national average.

Some of these perceptions can therefore be influenced by promoting the wide variety of trade and professional roles available with the sector. This step is key to helping construction careers appeal to a broader range of young people, especially young women whose most significant reason for being discouraged from joining the sector is the lack of gender diversity in the industry, and who are more interested in professional, specialist roles such as those in project management and health and safety.

The need to better inform young people about construction careers is underscored by the finding that nearly half of the young people surveyed reported that they had not received careers advice related to the construction sector whilst they were education, pointing to a large gap in opportunity to inform young people of these potential career pathways.

Overall, there is a clear opportunity to increase awareness of the various career opportunities within the construction sector amongst young people. Efforts to bring new workers to the sector should focus on addressing misconceptions about construction careers and promote the full range of roles available to help young people who are hesitant due to concerns around the gender diversity or physical labour in the sector, to see the sector as a viable and attractive career option.





Case Studies: Young People Starting Construction Careers

To support this survey, we spoke to two individuals training to be construction managers, to ask them about why they chose the construction sector as a career path, what they most enjoy about working in construction, and whether they would recommend a construction career to others.

Lily Whitney, Aged 20
Management Trainee at Overbury

What inspired you to pick the construction sector as a career path?

When I was little, I was always interested in programmes about renovations and new buildings, my mum mentioned to me about working in construction and it really started from there. I went to lots of careers events throughout high school to research all the roles. I think a pivotal moment that really inspired me was when I went on a school trip to a construction site and was offered the opportunity to have a walk around the project and look at some drawings. I then enrolled in Leeds college of building at 16, at the end of the 2-year course Overbury came in and presented their foundation programme at the college. The programme involved rotating around all the roles in the business and at the end choose a career path, this was perfect for me. I went into it thinking I wanted to work in the design department however, after spending time in project management I really found my confidence and loved every minute of it and end up choosing to specialise in this sector.

What do you most enjoy about working in the construction sector?

I love playing a part and watching projects go from concept to a beautiful space and after going through all the challenges that it took to get a project to that point it is really rewarding.

Why would you recommend other young people follow your footsteps and pick construction as a career?

Every day is different and comes with different challenges which keeps the job exciting. There are so many different roles in the industry that help bring a project to life which gives it a real sense of teamwork, with a great reward at the end. If you want a job that keeps you excited, throws different challenges at you and get to work with so many talented individuals I feel a career in construction would be for you.

Joe Giltrow, Aged 23

Trainee Site Manager at Bloor Homes

What inspired you to pick the construction sector as a career path?

When I first left school, I wasn't sure what career path I wanted to take. For about a year, I bounced between different jobs across various industries, trying to figure out what truly suited me. However, nothing felt like the right fit. It wasn't until I met my sister's partner, who is a bricklayer, that I started to see a clear direction for myself. Listening to his experiences on-site, the type of work he was involved in, and the opportunities available in the industry really opened my eyes. The idea of working in a hands-on, dynamic environment where I could physically see the results of my efforts excited me. That's when I knew construction was the right path for me.

What do you most enjoy about working in the construction sector?

There are so many aspects of the construction industry that I enjoy, but if I had to pick one, it would be the immense sense of fulfilment I get from my work. Seeing a project go from an idea on paper to a fully completed structure, knowing I played a key role in bringing it to life, is incredibly rewarding. Whether it's handing over the keys to someone's forever home or achieving a high score on a CQR (Construction Quality Review) visit,

there's always a strong sense of pride in what I do. Every project comes with its own challenges but overcoming them and witnessing the finished result makes all the effort worthwhile. It's a career where you can genuinely see the impact of your hard work.

Why would you recommend other young people follow your footsteps and pick construction as a career?

I would highly recommend the construction industry to any young person who is unsure about their career path because of the vast opportunities it offers. When I left school, I had no clear direction, but now, at just 23, I'm close to completing my second apprenticeship and working in a role that guarantees career progression. Construction is an industry that welcomes people from all backgrounds and skill levels. There are so many different departments and roles to explore, from hands-on trade work to project management and beyond. You also get to meet a diverse range of people, constantly learn new skills, and work in an environment that is always evolving. If you're looking for a career that offers stability, growth, and a real sense of accomplishment, construction is an excellent choice.

Recommendations

The results of these surveys indicate that there is overall a positive perception and openness towards careers in construction amongst young people, as well as the parents of young adults. Despite this, the number of new workers joining the sector still fall considerably short of what is required to meet the UK's current construction and infrastructure ambitions.

The current Labour Government has reiterated its intention to build 1.5 million new homes in England in the 5-year parliament as well as a host of additional infrastructure, construction and retrofit projects across the UK. These labour-intensive projects will require swift investment in skills as well as targeted campaigns to enhance interest in careers in construction and the wider built environment.

Whilst measures to boost the number of new workers in the sector will not deliver the workforce needed for these government ambitions overnight, steps to deliver skilled workers now can help ensure a future pipeline of skilled workers to increase the construction sector capacity in the long-term.

Whilst existing routes will continue to be crucial for getting more people into the sector, there is clearly an appetite for inspiring those in the younger, 13-15 age group to open the door to a wider range of career choices in future, as well as steps to try to encourage those aged 16-24 to look at options to begin a career in the construction industry.

Based on the results of these surveys, we believe the recommendations outlined can help bring more new entrants to the sector, to deliver a pipeline of well trained and competent professionals in the long-term.

Recommendations for Industry Stakeholders

Utilise social media to promote construction careers: With social media representing a more significant source of influence on young people's careers choices than other online resources and careers advisors, social media campaigning presents an opportunity to reach a wider audience when promoting construction careers. Whilst there are successful examples of such social media campaigns in the past, continued and careful promotion through this medium is key to changing perceptions and the sector's image amongst younger generations.

Raise awareness of professional and specialist construction careers: Skills gaps exist across the construction industry, in a range of key professional construction roles as well as trades that many would first associate with construction. Young people, particularly women, expressed a high level of interest in working in roles related to project management, technology, and health and safety. In addition, the most common reasons why young people would not choose a career in construction included the perception that it requires physical work and pays poorly. These survey results suggest taking steps to promote and improve awareness of the professional, non-manual occupations in

the sector would help in attracting a wider range of workers.

Whilst progress in this space has already been made through initiatives such as [GoConstruct](#), which has a range of resources showcasing all the roles in construction and provides guidance on these careers, further routes for promoting professional careers should be explored to reach a wider talent pool.¹⁹

Explore opportunities to adopt flexible working hours: Flexible working hours was identified as the feature that would be most likely to make young people apply for a role, for both young men and women. As such, the construction sector can take steps to further explore opportunities to offer flexible working arrangements. Whilst flexible working is not always feasible in the construction industry, due to adding complexity to managing safety risks inherent to construction work, some roles are able to feature flexible working and there has been consideration of the practical ways to adopt this method of working in construction by the Construction Leadership Council.²⁰

Ensure accessibility to careers beyond school leavers: Those aged 21-24 had both slightly a more positive view and a greater likelihood of joining the sector than those aged 16-20, which means there is potential to get encourage those who have already left education to join the sector. Ensuring awareness and accessible routes into construction careers to young people who are not directly leaving school could help more people join the industry. In addition to online careers advice, social media campaigning may be helpful for reaching this group who will usually not be in education, as well as ensuring job roles are accessible to young people with a range of qualification levels.

Strive to further professionalise:

Whilst there have been steps taken in areas of the construction industry to make itself a better place to work, the sector must continue to make strides in professionalising itself to appeal more widely to young people. This includes reflecting on industry practices and past failures with a view to continuous improvement on areas such as mental wellbeing, site safety and delivering quality for consumers. Progress in these areas will lead to improved views that will cascade to young people, particularly because construction is a generational industry, and many young people's views of the sector are shaped by people they know.

Recommendations for Government

Introduce a built environment GCSE:

We believe more built environment courses need to be introduced at a secondary school level as part of the national curriculum to attract more young people to choose a career in construction.

In Northern Ireland, a GCSE for construction and the built environment has been operational since September 2017 and in Autumn 2021 a GCSE in the built environment became available to schools in Wales. This has provided tangible opportunities for students to practically apply their learning of mandatory subjects, including Maths, English, and Science, as well as optional subjects, such as Design and Technology, Computer Technology, Geography, and Art and Design.

CIOB strongly supports the intention of the built environment GCSE in cementing a knowledge of the built environment and the various roles and opportunities it presents at a young age. These GCSEs teach methods in planning, designing, constructing, and managing the built environment, equipping

students with a set of interdisciplinary skills and knowledge that can be applied to a range of careers.

However, there is currently no nationally recognised qualification at GCSE level on the built environment in England.

The results from this survey indicate there would have been strong interest in taking a GCSE in construction and the built environment, leaving significant opportunity to increase the number of students aware of professional construction careers through the mainstream secondary education curriculum.

Explore opportunities to improve delivery of construction careers advice:

With almost half of young people reporting that construction careers were not covered in the careers advice they received whilst in education, there is opportunity to reach a wider talent pool of young people through more consistent coverage of construction in careers advice. The Government should therefore look at opportunities to strengthen the consistency and quality of careers advice to ensure that key sectors of the economy, such as construction, are covered appropriately.

Sound careers advice and guidance are crucial as the construction sector offers a wide range of careers suitable for people with different skills and interests, with different routes to entry, that can differ greatly from wider societal perceptions of the sector. There is an opportunity to appeal to young people beyond those who are interested in skilled trades, by emphasising roles in areas of construction such as management, technology, and health and safety. The range of careers in construction should be communicated in a positive light and move away from outdated perceptions that the construction sector is for those who did not achieve the grades required to go into higher education.

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