

# EXPLORING THE IMPACT OF THE AGEING POPULATION ON THE WORKFORCE AND BUILT ENVIRONMENT



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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



This report from the Chartered Institute of Building (CIOB) explores the effect of the ageing population on the construction industry, including the workforce, and the impact on the built environment.

Using qualitative inference and analysis, this report extrapolates the view of CIOB members who indicate that, despite legislative changes, awareness of the ageing population and its influence on the construction industry has slumped.

In terms of image, findings from this report also suggest that trade roles within the industry present the greatest problem, painting construction as a dirty and dangerous field of employment to potential recruits. Even amongst the Institute's members, there is a telling realisation that construction management careers do not feature in the responses. Given that the uptake of digital technologies such as Building Information Modelling (BIM) are expected to increase the demand for highly skilled labour, including managerial positions, the dominance of trade roles in the responses is somewhat surprising. To address the skills shortages facing the industry, we are clear that more needs to be done to reverse these stereotypes.

Despite the government's decision to introduce legislation to combat discrimination in the workplace, the Institute's members are less aware of the ageing population now, when compared with 2009, when the CIOB's last report on the subject was published. Given this outlook, it is important to recognise that the responsibility of raising awareness of the ageing population and its effects lies with government, industry and stakeholders, and is not restricted to the actions of one party. As we discover, one of the greatest recruitment challenges will be to overcome perceptions about older people, and their levels of both participation and productivity in the workplace.

This report also explores the impact of the ageing population on the physical built environment. Recommendations focus on the need to consider the challenges brought by an ageing population as potential 'win-win' opportunities. Given that alterations to buildings may benefit additional groups of individuals, such as disabled persons, it is important to consider adaptations to the existing building stock, which cater for the needs of an ageing population, as potential solutions for a multitude of users with accessibility needs.

Furthermore, to fully understand and appreciate the context in which these changes to the workforce and built environment are introduced, it is important to gain a greater insight into the global situation regarding the ageing population demographic.

# INTRODUCTION

The world's population is ageing rapidly and with profound results. The global share of older people (defined as aged 60 or over for the purpose of this report) increased from 9.2% in 1990 to 11.7% in 2013<sup>1</sup>.

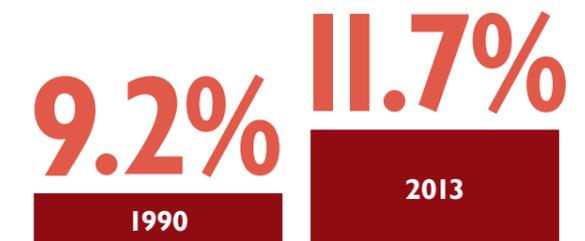
According to the UN, this trend is forecast to continue, with older people set to account for over one-fifth – 21.1% – of the world's population by 2050.

The situation in the UK mirrors the global perspective. The United Nations' World Population Ageing Report ranks the UK 28th in terms of the percentage of its population aged 60 or over. This equates to more than 14.7 million people<sup>2</sup>.

This change in the ageing UK demographic can be attributed to the widespread fall in fertility rates and increases in life expectancy. The Total Fertility Rate, generally defined as the number of children born to a woman of child bearing age, has remained below replacement since the 1970s<sup>3</sup>. In the literature on demographics and population trends, it is well documented that women born after 1958 have had, on average, fewer than two children<sup>4</sup>. And as fertility rates have fallen, the UK has witnessed a rise in women's participation in the labour force. In the 1970s, 55% of women who sought work were employed, which contrasts with 65.8% between 2010 and mid-2013<sup>5</sup>. But despite these trends, women account for only a small proportion of the entire construction workforce in the UK.

Data from the World Bank shows a rapid increase in the UK's life expectancy over the last fifteen years, from an estimated 76 years in 1990 to an average of 81 years in 2013<sup>6</sup>. Improvements in health care provision and health awareness have helped, and continue to help, increase life expectancy.

Although a great achievement of modern times, the combination of increased life expectancy and slowing birth rates has led to concern over the additional burden placed on the working age population. Given that the annual cost of providing health and social care is significantly greater for older people, questions remain as to whether these services will continue to be sustainable in the future. Projections from the Office for National Statistics (ONS) estimate that the UK dependency ratio will decline to 2.74 in 2037, down from 3.29 in 2017<sup>7</sup>. As this ratio declines, the number of working age adults reduces in relation to every individual out of work, potentially placing a greater burden on the country's finances and welfare system.



**THE GLOBAL SHARE OF OLDER PEOPLE**  
DEFINED AS AGED 60 OR OVER

<sup>1</sup> United Nations, *World Population Ageing 2013*, 2013

<sup>2</sup> ONS, *Annual Mid-year Population Estimates, 2013*, 26 June 2014

<sup>3</sup> Note: Replacement fertility is the total fertility rate at which women would have enough children to replace themselves and their partner (typically 2.1 births per woman)

<sup>4</sup> Government Office for Science, *Future Identities: Changing identities in the UK – the next 10 years*, January 2013

<sup>5</sup> ONS, *Women in the labour market, 2013*, 25 September 2013

<sup>6</sup> The World Bank, *World Development Indicators: Mortality*, 2015

<sup>7</sup> ONS, *Compendium of UK statistics: Population and migration*, February 2014

Data from the World Bank shows a rapid increase in the UK's life expectancy over the last fifteen years, from an estimated 76 years in 1990 to an average of 81 years in 2013.

But the challenges are by no means confined to health and social care. The UK's built environment has a crucial role to play in terms of raising life expectancy and improving the lives of older people. This may be achieved through:

- measures that help the elderly to heat their homes through cheaper and more energy efficient means;
- improving the design and accessibility of buildings and ensuring quality in the built environment;
- creating public spaces that improve activeness and wellbeing.

The question for the industry is how best to adapt the built environment to suit the needs of an ageing population in a way that can be considered both financially viable and all-encompassing.

The aim of this report is to gain an insight into the challenges facing the construction industry as a result of the ageing population. For the purpose of this report, the impact of the ageing population on the construction industry can be easily divided into two subsets: issues affecting the construction workforce, and those concerning the built environment.

By comparing the findings with those contained in the CIOB's previous report, we assess what lessons the industry has learnt and what it needs to grasp in order to tackle the skills issues that exist.

## SKILLS SHORTAGES

The ageing population has a direct effect on the workforce and available skillsets in the wider economy. In the UK, the skills shortage in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematical (STEM) careers is well documented.

Unsurprisingly, a similar situation exists in construction, although this typically receives less media attention or direct scrutiny. As an industry, construction is heavily reliant on older workers and struggles to attract and retain younger recruits. Now, with 19% of the construction workforce set to retire in the next 5-10 years<sup>8</sup>, the question for the industry is how to respond to the skills shortage, and prevent it from deepening. This question becomes even more poignant when we take the government's commitment to boost productivity into consideration.

It is also vital, when drawing comparisons, to question whether our educational system exacerbates the prevalence of skills shortages in the wider economy. For example, media reports argue that a selection of degree courses in the UK have become less demanding. Even where universities are producing graduates with degrees in subjects sought by employers, there is some concern that these university leavers do not have the right level of knowledge, skill or practical experience to find degree-related employment. However, this finding is common across all industries, and is not unique to new recruits entering the construction industry.

In fact, many schools in the UK are experiencing a shortage of fully qualified teachers. Similarly, in medicine – an industry also known for its long working hours – there is a documented shortage in the number of practising anaesthetists.

Whilst skills shortages in the construction industry are significant, other sectors and industries are facing similar shortages with some, such as the engineering profession, seeing a far greater deficiency of both skills and relevant expertise.

Even so, the skills shortage facing construction is compounded by those entering the industry not being suitably qualified for the job, which can create 'hard-to-fill' vacancies. This insight is echoed in a report by the Construction Industry Training Board (CITB)<sup>9</sup> which notes that insufficient work experience is one of the top reasons for skills gaps and shortages in the economy. Similarly, research from the London Chamber of Commerce and Industry, in conjunction with KPMG<sup>10</sup>, indicates that skills shortages and skills gaps often result in additional costs, delays and sometimes even lost business.

Whilst there is a wealth of discussion on the prevalence of skills shortages, there is an increasing level of research on the under-utilisation of skills in the workplace. This can have a detrimental impact on productivity and output. The UK Commission for Employment and Skills (UKCES) observes incidences of individuals being overqualified for their position, resulting in staff feeling demotivated. For these reasons, and those outlined in this section, it is vitally important to unpick the factors that create skills shortages in the first place and form a working environment that suits older workers; but does not discourage their younger counterparts.

Previous research from the CIOB has indicated that changes to the UK's population pyramid will have a profound impact on the construction industry. Recommendations from the report highlighted the need to raise awareness of the ageing population and its impact on society as well as the broader economy<sup>11</sup>. Six years on, we assess what lessons have been learnt, and what lessons can be learnt, in order to improve the industry's handling of the ageing population and the skills challenges.

<sup>8</sup> ONS, *Labour market statistics, July 2013*, 17 July 2013

<sup>9</sup> CITB Construction Skills, *Training and Skills in the Construction Sector*, June 2011

<sup>10</sup> London Chamber of Commerce & Industry & KPMG, *Skills to Build*, November 2014

<sup>11</sup> CIOB, *The impact of the ageing population on the construction industry*, 2009

Despite a prolonged economic downturn marked by redundancies and instability, the UK construction industry has been one of the main engines of growth in recent years. Globally, the construction market is expected to grow by approximately 70% by 2025<sup>12</sup>.

**Previous research from the CIOB has indicated that changes to the UK's population pyramid will have a profound impact on the construction industry.**

While this projected growth in the sector is welcome, it's worth remembering that expansion in workloads demands an expansion in workforce capability. Indeed, employment forecasts from the CITB suggest that construction will need to find almost 224,000 new recruits between 2015 and 2019. This is to replace workers lost during the recession and those set to retire, as well as to meet the growing levels of output. Ongoing debates over migration and skills policy may also have drastic implications for the future capability of the workforce.

**CONSTRUCTION WILL  
NEED TO FIND ALMOST**



**224,000  
NEW RECRUITS**

**BETWEEN 2015 AND 2019**

## MIGRATION

Whilst the migration debate continues to gather traction in the media, the dependence of the construction sector on migration and migrant labour is evident<sup>13</sup>. Yet, whilst much has been made of the ability of migrant labour to offset skills shortages in the sector, it is clear that migrant workers alone cannot address the issue in the long-term. Put simply, the numbers needed in the sector far outweigh the number of migrants seeking work in construction.

## APPRENTICES

Apprentices are a similar case in point since they can only be considered part of the solution to the skills shortage. Indeed, apprentice uptake slumped by 33% in 2012/13, a fall of 14,000 over the course of two years<sup>14</sup>. In addition, industry projections will not provide the numbers of recruits needed, despite the government's ambitious target of delivering three million apprenticeships over the course of the next five years.

Given these estimates, the best response to the skills shortage is undoubtedly a combination of policies and practices, including more effective employee recruitment and retention. It is important to note that part of the solution will require employers to actively recruit older workers, and target more individuals in their 40s and 50s. The industry will also be required to source both migrant labour and train apprentices – as it currently continues to do – but in far greater numbers.

## OLDER WORKFORCE: BURDEN OR BENEFIT?

Research which evaluates the impact of the ageing population on the construction industry draws on a number of factors to explain the exit of older workers and the challenges facing the workforce. By examining these factors, it may be possible to gain a greater insight into the most prominent issues and ensure that construction is able to grasp the inherent opportunities by retaining older workers.

Many of the challenges regarding the retention of older workers concern working conditions. Indeed, previous research has indicated that the physical and hazardous nature of construction can serve as a push factor for

older workers<sup>15</sup>. Other push factors include long hours, frequent travel and the difficulty of combining work with caring responsibilities. Additionally, factors such as age discrimination and poor health have been cited as reasons for older workers making the decision to leave the industry.

Previous studies of older workers have noted a perception that older employees possess a greater aptitude for work<sup>16</sup> when compared with their younger counterparts. It has also been speculated that older workers possess greater customer service skills and can work well under pressure. Similarly, there is a documented perception amongst employers that age translates into a greater skills set, as well as experience and commitment.

With a large percentage of the construction workforce approaching retirement age shortly, there is a pressing need for employers to take a multi-faceted approach to the issue. This should include a focus on repurposing and adapting, where necessary, existing job roles to suit older workers in order to encourage phased retirement. Additional data suggests that flexible working and family leave have a significant role to play in terms of improving the work-life balance for older workers. If construction is to avoid mass retirement these practises may warrant further debate and discussion.

## MENTORING

Mentoring has been highlighted as another key area for employers to make use of existing workers' skills and to train new recruits successfully. There is an opportunity for employers to utilise the skills of older workers by encouraging them to work with new recruits and share their knowledge and expertise. Repurposing and changing older workers' job roles in this way could enable businesses to retain much of the existing skills-base and share knowledge with the next wave of recruits.

Stephen Martin, Chief Executive of construction firm Clugston, participated in Channel 4's 'Undercover Boss' to understand the issues affecting the corporation<sup>17</sup>. Since appearing on the show, Clugston has implemented a number of changes designed to improve the working environment for older members of staff. Recognising

the expertise of older workers, Clugston implemented a mentoring programme and invested in nine trainees and three apprentices with the aim of improving skills transfer to younger members of staff.

**With a large percentage of the construction workforce approaching retirement age shortly, there is a pressing need for employers to take a multi-faceted approach to the issue.**

## CHANGING LEGISLATION

Whilst the ageing population and older workforce provide a series of opportunities to facilitate skills transfer, it is also important to consider existing legislation, and recent changes to it, which have a direct influence on the workforce.

As a result of the government's decision to officially repeal the Default Retirement Age (DRA) in October 2011, retirement can no longer be forced upon older workers purely on the grounds of their age. According to government announcements, the aim was to encourage longer working lives and showcase the important contribution that older workers make.

The decision to repeal the DRA has, and will continue to have, far-ranging implications for a number of industries including construction. However, for older workers who wish to continue working, this represents a step in the right direction.

Nevertheless, it is important to recognise that repealing the DRA only affects the staff retention rate. It does not have a direct influence on the recruitment process or reveal anything about its inclusiveness. In other words, for older workers who have experienced age discrimination in the recruitment process, the government's decision to repeal the DRA does little to remove such barriers.

12 HM Treasury, *Construction 2025*, July 2013

13 CIOB, *CIOB perspectives: An analysis on migration in the construction sector*, March 2015

14 CIOB & CITB, *No More Lost Generations*, February 2014

15 Strategic Promotion of Ageing Research Capacity, *Under the older worker in construction*, January 2008

16 Gibb, Leaviss and Bust, *Older construction workers: needs and abilities*, 2013

17 Department for Work & Pensions, *Employer case studies: Employing older workers for an effective multi-generational workforce*, February 2013

# CHALLENGES IN THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT

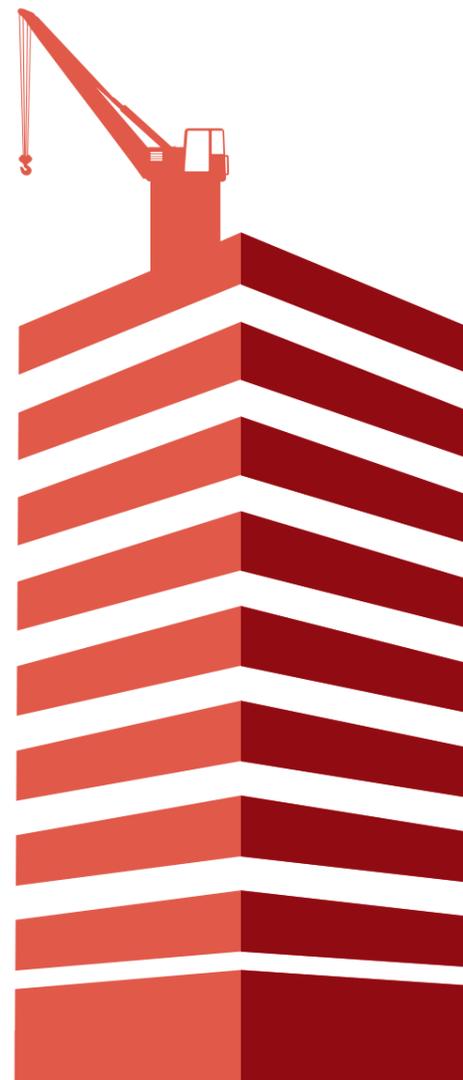
The challenges facing the construction industry are not limited to the workplace. In fact, previous research from the CIOB has indicated that its members perceive public transport and accessibility to the built environment to be among the most prominent issues facing the older generation.

When asked, 70% of respondents said that changes to public transportation could significantly improve the community, while 63% said that access was a key issue. What is clear is the overwhelming opinion that the built environment ought to be adapted to suit older generations, with 97% of respondents in agreement.

Although there are a number of considerations for policy makers and industry professionals, two key questions emerge: how, and in what ways, should the building stock be adapted to cater for the needs of older people? The CIOB's previous report on the ageing population found that, of all the possible adaptations to commercial buildings, lifts and level access are the preferred ways of improving accessibility.

The focus on accessibility has gathered momentum since our previous report. This momentum has been coupled with the introduction of the Equality Act and subsequent revisions to the Disability Discrimination Act (1995), as well as improvements to Part M (Access to and Use of Buildings) of the Building Regulations. As a result of this legislation, service providers are required to make reasonable adjustments to ensure that disabled people are granted access.

...of all the possible adaptations to commercial buildings, lifts and level access are the preferred ways of improving accessibility.



# METHODOLOGY

The survey was conducted using a web-based questionnaire that respondents could access through the CIOB website.

Respondents were asked a number of demographic questions regarding age, gender, job level, job sector and location. Questions also focused on respondents' attitudes towards the ageing population and access to the built environment. The survey was also available to the wider public and industry, following its publication on the CIOB website. In total, the survey captured 994 respondents, of which more than 90% were UK based.

Almost 21% of respondents stated that their occupation centred on construction management, whilst 94% of respondents were male. To analyse the demographics further, the majority of respondents were aged 51-61. This closely mirrors previous CIOB research. In terms of job level, nearly 42% confirmed that they either worked in senior management, or at directorate level.

Fig 1. Age of respondents

20 or under	0%
21 – 30	6%
31 – 40	12%
41 – 50	25%
51 – 61	35%
61 – 65	11%
66 and over	11%



# RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In terms of working practices, 24% of respondents stated that flexible working was offered at their place of work. Although this figure of 24% is somewhat encouraging, much of the existing literature on employment and demographics within the workplace suggests that firms could go further to retain older workers.

As it stands, very little is known about the nature of flexible working practices or for which roles they are most applicable. In this sense, it is necessary to ask whether flexible working has the potential to become all-encompassing, and whether these practices really go far enough.

Of the respondents who cited that mentoring was offered by their organisation, and older workers participated in such schemes, 37% stated that their company employed more than 200 members of staff – by definition, a large organisation.

A number of respondents cited that they could not offer mentoring, simply because they could not attract the right person or people for the job.

As before, this illustrates that older people in the workforce do not simply plug opportunities for younger recruits as previous studies have indicated. In fact, the factors that prevent mentoring are not, according to this report, so much a lack of will, but an absence of high calibre candidates. This point reinforces the positive link between both groups of workers and the ongoing skills shortage in the industry.

**A number of respondents cited that they could not offer mentoring, simply because they could not attract the right person or people for the job.**

**Fig 2. Percentage of respondents who offer workplace mentoring.**

Yes	63%
No	30%
Don't know	7%

Findings from the survey also indicate that 68% of respondents say they are aware of the challenges facing the construction industry as a result of the ageing population. When compared with earlier research, this represents a decline in awareness, from 76% in 2009 to 68% in 2015.

When analysing this trend in greater depth, we find that nearly 30% of respondents who are aware of the ageing population and its challenges are either self-employed or working for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). Of those who cite awareness of the challenges, nearly half employ less than 30 members of staff, making them 'micro' SMEs.

This presents an interesting point for discussion. Arguably, firms with just a handful of employees are more likely to feel the results of 'cliff edge' retirement, yet are in less of a position to respond quickly when compared with larger corporations.

**Fig 3. Percentage of respondents who are aware of the challenges facing the construction industry**

Yes	68%
No	30%
Don't know	2%

Previous studies of older people's retirement aspirations have indicated that retirement seminars, annual reviews, and an open workforce culture play a vital role in terms of encouraging older workers to phase their retirement. Despite this, only 11% of respondents confirmed that retirement planning seminars were offered to employees.

When analysing these findings in greater depth, we found that a significant proportion of respondents who do not offer, or have immediate access to, mentoring within the workplace are, again, typically self-employed or work for an SME. This should not be surprising. In fact, we should expect larger firms to have greater resources at their disposal, and hence a greater budget for training and personal development.

**Fig 4. Percentage of respondents who acknowledge that their company used the following measures to help retain ageing workers.**

Flexible working (e.g. job sharing)	24%
Succession planning	18%
Adaptation of job descriptions	9%
Training for line managers to manage an ageing workforce	3%
Mid-life career reviews	3%
Retirement planning seminars	11%
None	21%
Don't know	8%
Other, please describe	4%

NB: All percentages have been rounded and therefore may not total 100%.

**Interestingly, research from UKCES indicates that the rate of self-employment amongst professions in the construction industry rises to one in three after five years' experience – an increase from one in five after just one or two years' experience<sup>18</sup>.**

Although self-employment is not to be discouraged, the nature of working for oneself has a profound impact on the industry and can make it hard for the industry to offer projections, plan ahead and train the next generation of recruits.

## CONSTRUCTION: HARD HATS AND HI-VIS?

The importance of phased retirement can be linked to the mentoring of younger workers. When asked, 68% of respondents agreed that mentoring was 'very valuable' and presented a number of opportunities to develop skills. Of the responses, 63% stated that mentoring was offered. Research by ACAS<sup>19</sup> has also indicated that older workers possess a wide range of skills, which can be passed onto new recruits through workplace mentoring. However, as noted previously in this report, existing research on practices within the workplace, such as mentoring, says little about the duration of such programmes. Where mentoring does feature, research indicates that these programmes predominantly focus on more traditional 'hands on' roles, such as carpentry, bricklaying, and plastering as opposed to construction management positions.

18 UKCES, *Construction, Building Services Engineering and Planning: Sector Skills Assessment 2012, Evidence Report 65*, October 2012

19 ACAS, *The Employment Relations Challenges of an Ageing Workforce*, December 2011

To build on this point, many respondents consider that the nature of construction dissuades older people from joining the industry. Even so, a large majority of these same respondents went on to specify manual, on-site work as the major deterrent for ageing workers. Here, the responses actually provide a far greater picture of the industry as a whole. Despite the growth in digital technologies, which have the potential to increase the level of work completed off-site, the overwhelming sense in the responses is one of the industry consisting primarily of hard hats and hi-vis clothing.

Fig 5. Perceived importance of mentoring amongst respondents

Very valuable	67%
Valuable	30%
Not valuable	1%
Not valuable at all	0%
Don't know	1%

When asked to comment on the unattractive features of the industry, a significant proportion also cited travel and long working hours, partly due to their potential to negatively impact upon family and caring responsibilities. For older workers these changing priorities may lead to a desire to retire earlier, to seek self-employment in consultancy roles or, alternatively, to prolong working lives in order to pay for the costs of care. The desire to prolong work could also be said for younger workers, who are typically receiving apprentice-level wages and may not be able to afford to travel across the country from one project to the next. This may also be the reasoning for a greater reliance on migrant workers, who tend to be much more flexible in their approach to travel and hours worked.

Older workers have also cited poor health as a reason to withdraw prematurely from the labour market. Therefore, it is intuitive that greater awareness of the issues facing older people in the workplace, plus more flexibility from employers, may present better opportunities for extending employment.

As mentioned previously, with the adoption of digital technologies such as Building Information Modelling (BIM) within the industry, it is projected that the numbers needed in construction may fall in some sectors and trades.

The development of digital technologies should mean less work being carried out on site, and potentially less travel. According to a report by the Chartered Institute of Professional Development (CIPD), it is estimated that the number of new recruits in low skilled sectors may actually fall as technology is adopted and implemented<sup>20</sup>.

Yet, over the same period, the CIPD suggests that the demand for high skilled labour, including managers, will rise. This coincides with research from the CITB, which estimates that over 17,000 construction managers will be needed over the course of the next four years<sup>21</sup>. So, whilst low skilled labour undoubtedly accounts for part of the industry, these responses suggest that construction management is not yet adequately recognised as a profession in its own right, nor seen as the future of the industry. In this respect, it appears that the stereotypical 'hard hats and hi-vis' view of the construction industry dissuades older workers from joining the industry. This is something that needs to be addressed before the skills shortage deepens further.

The development of digital technologies should mean less work being carried out on site, and potentially less travel.



## BUILDING STOCK

We asked whether it is important to adapt buildings to cater for the needs of older people. Less than half of those who agreed went on to specify that these needs are incorporated into the design of their construction and building projects. And, of those that incorporate the needs of older people into the design, 23% represent organisations employing more than 200 members of staff; again, a large corporation by definition. Interestingly, less than half of those surveyed felt that buildings were generally designed to meet the needs of older people.

Fig 6. Percentage of respondents who incorporate the needs of the ageing population in their projects

Yes	43%
No	46%
Don't know	12%

Other statistics draw upon the importance of retaining older workers. Although 57% agree that it is 'very important' to retain older workers, and 28% agree it is 'somewhat important', there are questions to be asked about whether this pledge translates into firm processes. It also raises a question about whether corporate social responsibility (CSR) policies involving older workers are more than simply rhetoric. This is especially poignant and, given that only 43% incorporate the needs of older people into the design of their projects, the substantive nature of each CSR policy involving older workers warrants further research.

Fig 7. Perceived importance of retaining older workers, as outlined by respondents

Very important	57%
Somewhat important	28%
Important	13%
Not important	2%
Don't know	0%

Interestingly, less than half of those surveyed felt that buildings were generally designed to meet the needs of older people.

## THE EFFECTS OF THE AGEING POPULATION ON THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT

As previous research has indicated, one of the greatest challenges posed by the ageing population will be the conversion of the existing building stock. Currently, a large proportion of pensioners are living in accommodation deemed inadequate and unsuitable when compared with their daily needs. The issue, however, is not simply one of quality. Indeed, studies have also indicated that a significant proportion of older people are living in accommodation that is largely under-occupied. When we consider the shortage of housing across the UK, the issue of under-occupation becomes even more poignant for policymakers.

Whilst the Spare Room Subsidy came into force in April 2013 to deal more effectively with under-occupation in social housing, the issue is somewhat controversial, not least because of its impact on Housing Benefit. As a result, the policy has been subject to much criticism in the media. Here, it is important to consider the scope of under-occupation in private accommodation, for which the policy does little to address.

## BUILDING DESIGN

Although there is a clear consensus among respondents about the need to adapt the built environment to cater for older people, only 43% agreed that this consideration was translated into practice and readily incorporated into each project's design.

20 CIPD, *Avoiding the demographic crunch: Labour supply and the ageing workforce*, June 2015

21 CITB, *Industry insights: Construction skills network blueprint for construction 2015-2019*, January 2015

Fig 8: Respondents' answers to what measures to housing would improve ease of use for older generations

Wider doorways	10%
Downstairs bathroom	22%
Downstairs bedroom	12%
Light switches/sockets at a convenient height	7%
Wider car parking spaces and in close proximity to building	10%
Adaptable design	24%
Provision for a lift, or stair lift	12%
Nothing	0%
Don't know	0%
Other, please specify	3%

The Built Environment Professional Educational (BEPE) project was launched by the coalition government in December 2013 to improve the way in which we learn about inclusive design. The project seeks to build on the success of the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games and the inclusivity of the Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park. BEPE aims to improve the uptake of inclusive design amongst educational establishments, professional bodies, and government.

To date, fourteen key professional institutions, including the CIOB, have lent their support to the BEPE. As has been well documented, BEPE sets out a roadmap for incorporating and actively teaching inclusive design in education frameworks and universities. Going forward, measures to adapt buildings to cater for the needs of older people could be considered within this overarching aim of teaching and fostering knowledge of inclusive design.

### ADAPTATION: 'WIN-WIN'?

When asked to specify the biggest improvements that could be made to housing to ensure ease of use, adaptable design, provisions for a downstairs bathroom, and lift access were the top three responses. The World Health Organisation (WHO) reported at the start of 2015 that 74% of men and 64% of women are predicted to fall under the classification of 'overweight' by 2030<sup>22</sup>. In this respect, it may be useful to jointly consider the issues brought about by an ageing population and obesity. When we consider, for example, that adaptable design and provisions for downstairs amenities - including lift access - are likely to improve accessibility for the overweight and disabled, it may be useful to view such amendments to the existing building stock as a 'win-win' strategy.

In terms of amendments to commercial buildings, the top three responses were level access to buildings (20%), lifts as standard (16%) and accessible reception areas (16%). Additional responses indicated a need to improve signage for older people. Similarly, improved accessibility to local facilities, better public transport and improved pavements and roads were considered to be the three biggest improvements that could be made to the local environment. As before, a number of the responses (including level access, lifts, and improvements to the local environment) have the potential to benefit other groups, such as disabled and obese people.

The Built Environment Professional Educational (BEPE) project was launched by the coalition government in December 2013 to improve the way in which we learn about inclusive design.

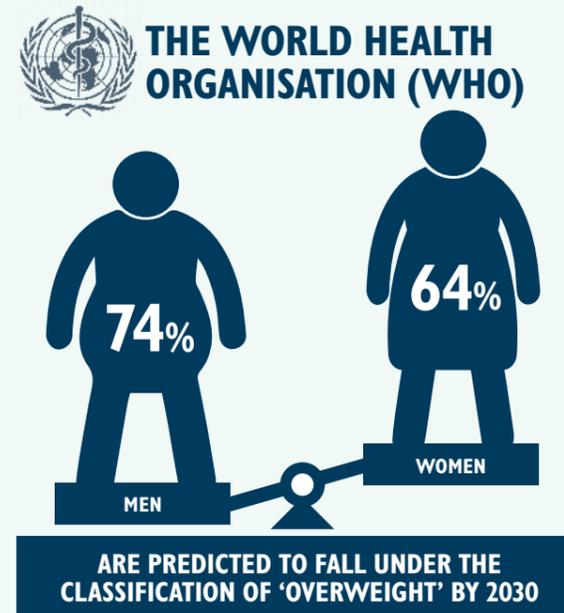


Fig 9: Respondents' answers to what measures to commercial buildings would improve ease of use for older generations

Level access to buildings	20%
Accessible reception areas and communication systems	16%
Lifts as standard	16%
More toilets	4%
Wheelchair accessible entrances, corridors and doorways	14%
Car parks with designated drop off points	13%
Light switches/sockets at a convenient height	1%
Adaptable design	14%
Nothing	0%
Don't know	0%
Other, please specify	1%

### RESPONSIBILITY: INDUSTRY OR GOVERNMENT?

According to the survey, 70% of respondents consider that the UK government has not dealt effectively with the challenges posed by an ageing population. 31% of respondents consider that industry has an even greater role to play when it comes to ensuring ease of use and driving up housing standards through the adoption of best practice. When asked, 77% agreed that best practice has a significant role to play in terms of encouraging firms within the industry to construct easy-to-use buildings. Although respondents consider that the UK government has not done enough to deal with the challenges posed by the ageing population, this is to be somewhat expected given that the vast majority of respondents are from industry. Whilst the government has taken legislative steps by introducing the Equality Act and removing the Default Retirement Age (DRA), if, as respondents suggest, cultural change is needed, this will undoubtedly take longer to achieve and present more of a challenge.

Fig 10: Perception of whether the UK government has dealt with the ageing population effectively, as outlined by respondents

Yes	10%
No	70%
Don't know	20%

70% of respondents consider that the UK government has not dealt effectively with the challenges posed by an ageing population.

22 The Guardian, WHO report: 74% of men and 64% of women in UK to be overweight by 2030, 2015

Since our last report, we have seen the introduction of the Equality Act 2010, which brings together a range of existing legislation under one heading. However, whilst the introduction of measures designed to outlaw discrimination is undoubtedly positive, only 44% of respondents were familiar with the Equality Act 2010. Additionally, awareness of the ageing population and its impact on the construction industry has declined since the CIOB's earlier report. Whilst it has been noted that the sample sizes vary, it is somewhat concerning to see awareness of the ageing population slipping, particularly in light of growing legislation in the fields of ergonomics and workplace discrimination.

Although respondents consider that the UK government has not done enough to deal with the challenges posed by the ageing population this is to be somewhat expected given that the vast majority of respondents are from industry.



## CONCLUSIONS

One of the core conclusions to draw from the survey is a need to view the ageing population positively, despite the phenomenon presenting a number of challenges for the construction industry.

Among the issues for consideration are the impact upon the workforce itself and the efforts required to improve the existing building stock to cater for the needs of older generations. However, the industry should regard some of these measures as opportunities.

Another theme which runs throughout the report is the overarching issue of the industry's image. CIOB members cited trade roles and heavy lifting when asked to specify what factors may deter older workers from a career in the industry; highlighting the dominance of on-site activity.

The problem, it seems, even amongst individuals working in the industry, is the perception that construction is simply comprised of hard hats and hi-vis clothing. To expand further, there appears to be a lack of awareness in terms of careers in construction management, or awareness of the off-site activities that are associated with construction, such as design and planning.

As this report has argued, the needs of older people are not necessarily mutually exclusive from the requirements of other individuals and groups. What becomes clear from this report is the sense that adaptable design is the preferred method of improving the building stock to meet the needs of older people.

Given the assumption that adaptation has the potential to benefit a multitude of groups, it may be useful to consider this approach as a 'win-win' scenario. In other words, when we think of the ageing population in this way, it may actually pay to convert buildings, and actively consider inclusive design. As this report has argued, the needs of the older population can, to some extent, be combined with the needs of the disabled and the obese.

When we consider the findings of this report, it is clear that more needs to be done to combat the impending skills crisis in the industry and ensure that the workforce and built environment are truly sustainable. Doing so presents a number of significant challenges and opportunities which warrant further discussion. As construction simply does not train its own people in sufficient numbers, industry and government will be required to look at boosting the support for training, mentoring and work experience to help overcome some of the skills issues that exist.

Whilst the ageing population presents a number of challenges for industry and policy makers, utilising the ageing workforce better and redefining buildings to meet the needs of the population today are helpful starting points.

The problem, it seems, even amongst individuals working in the industry, is the perception that construction is simply comprised of hard hats and hi-vis clothing.

# RECOMMENDATIONS

Whilst there is room to improve awareness of legislation in the built environment and workplace concerning ageing workers, we are clear that the responsibility for doing so rests with government, industry and a multitude of stakeholders.

When we consider the role of professional bodies in the built environment, we are clear that the third sector has the potential to drive up industry standards, improve best practise and help foster more inclusive design amongst the wider professions.

To increase awareness of the ageing population and its effects, we recommend the BEPE roadmap be expanded to other educational institutions and professional bodies. This would help to increase uptake and ensure that inclusivity features as part of the education framework of professionals in the built environment.

In order to allay the long-held perception that construction is simply comprised of on-site activity, contractors may wish to consider extending apprenticeships and mentoring to careers that require more of a managerial focus and nuance, including those located off-site. By encouraging older workers to engage in mentoring, there is a real opportunity to spread knowledge transfer within the industry. To be successful, we need to see further information outlining how such schemes work in practise.

To increase awareness of the ageing population and its effects, we recommend the BEPE roadmap be expanded to other educational institutions and professional bodies.

As the responses reveal support for a more accessible built environment, it may be useful to view amendments to the building stock as a potential 'win-win' scenario. As this report has argued, the needs of the ageing population can, to some extent, be combined with the needs of the disabled and the obese. In other words, when we think of the ageing population in this way, it may actually pay to convert buildings, and actively consider inclusive design. Given this assessment, it is intuitive for contractors and designers to actively consider and implement inclusive design at every stage of the building lifecycle.







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