



CIOB

The Chartered
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 2026.



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.

By David Barnes, Head of Policy & Public Affairs and Miruna Leitoiu, Policy & Public Affairs Officer

Published by the Chartered Institute of Building (CIOB)

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CIOB, 3 Arlington Square, Downshire Way, Bracknell, RG12 1WA, UK Registered Charity No. (England and Wales) 280795 and (Scotland) SC041725

www.ciob.org

Tel: +44 (0) 1344 630700

Email: policy@ciob.org.uk

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Key Survey Results

Attitudes of Young People Aged 16 – 24

66%	have a positive view on careers in the construction sector
30%	are likely to consider pursuing a career in the construction sector
45%	agree construction careers were not covered in careers advice they received whilst in education
28%	agree the construction sector does not have good career opportunities
36%	agree construction has a poor workplace culture
35%	agree construction is not a well-respected career path
21%	agree construction is an unprofessional sector to work in
36%	were not aware of any of the three new construction-specific programmes introduced by the Government

Attitudes of Parents with Children Aged 16 – 24

62%	have a positive view on careers in the construction sector
75%	would be supportive of their child pursuing a career in the construction sector
44%	feel under-informed about modern career options for their children
42%	would be likely to recommend a career in construction to their children
16%	agree the construction sector does not have good career opportunities
26%	agree construction has a poor workplace culture
21%	agree construction is not a well-respected career path
11%	agree construction is an unprofessional sector to work in

Introduction

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

The [first report](#), released in March 2025,¹ found that two thirds (68%) of young people surveyed held a positive view of construction careers while more than three quarters of parents (79%) were supportive of their child pursuing a career in the sector.

Given the critical need to recruit more people into the construction sector, the CIOB thought it would be appropriate to conduct the survey on an annual basis, to monitor trends or changes in the attitudes, perception, and views of the sector.

This survey 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 of parents supporting their children to work in the sector. The research also gauges the most significant sources of influence on young people's career choices, to understand where measures aimed at raising awareness of construction careers should be targeted.

It is well documented the construction sector is a major sector for employment, with an estimated workforce of 2.05 million people in the UK.² However, the sector continues to face an ongoing skills shortage and needs an increased pipeline of skilled workers joining the industry.

The latest iteration of the Construction Industry Training Board's (CITB) Construction Workforce Outlook 2025-2029 forecasts that 239,300 extra workers will be required to meet UK construction output by 2029. That is 47,860 per year.³

With the Labour Government now in its second full year, it continues to pursue its target of 1.5 million new homes in England by 2029. Alongside this, it has brought in new structures to recruit and upskill people into the construction sector in the form of Construction Skills Bootcamps and Homebuilding Skills Hubs.

But we know intentions for recruitment differ vastly from delivery making it crucial to understand the current views of both young people and parents towards the construction sector.

The results from this survey 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.

¹ Chartered Institute of Building (CIOB), Attitudes Towards Construction Careers, 3 March 2025

² Office for National Statistics (ONS), Labour Force Survey

³ Construction Industry Training Board (CITB), Construction Workforce Outlook 2025-2029, 17 June 2025



Construction Careers in National Skills Policy

Over the past decade, successive governments have acknowledged both the strategic importance of construction to the UK economy and the persistent challenge of youth unemployment and high numbers of young people not in education, employment or training (NEET). Construction has been recognised as a foundational sector within the UK's Industrial Strategy,⁴ underpinning housing delivery, infrastructure, energy transition and regional growth. Yet, despite this recognition, the industry has continued to struggle to attract and retain young talent at the required scale.

The challenge of recruiting young people into construction is not a new phenomenon. It has remained a structural issue, even during periods of sectoral growth and heightened political focus on housing and infrastructure. Governments have introduced multiple reforms to post-16 education and apprenticeships over the past decade, including the Apprenticeship Levy, the development of new apprenticeship standards, and the rollout of T Levels from 2020 onwards. However, these reforms were designed as system-wide changes to the skills landscape rather than targeted interventions to promote construction careers specifically. Boosting the number of new entrants into construction was not, in itself, the central objective; rather, construction was one of many sectors expected to benefit indirectly from broader vocational reforms.

The introduction of Skills Bootcamps in 2020 provides a clear example of this generalist approach. While Bootcamps were framed as a flexible, employer-led route into priority sectors, initial pilots and the first expansion wave did not offer construction-related courses. By March 2023, only 65 out of approximately 1,800 Bootcamps available were construction related.⁵ This limited provision restricted the programme's impact as a meaningful pipeline into the built environment, particularly at a time when the sector was already reporting acute skills shortages.

Similarly, the rollout of T Levels, which intended to elevate the status of technical education, did not initially deliver a stable construction pathway. The only construction-related T Level introduced in the early phases was discontinued in 2024 due to low uptake, with no direct equivalent replacement at that point. It was not until the 2025 intake that new

construction-focused T Levels were introduced, with a further technical pathway due to become available from September 2026. For much of the early reform period, therefore, the technical education system lacked a sustained and clearly defined construction offer for young people.

More broadly, recent parliamentary scrutiny has reinforced concerns about the impact of policy instability on confidence in vocational pathways. The Education Committee's Further Education and Skills inquiry heard evidence that recent reviews of level 3 qualifications created significant uncertainty not only for students and their parents, but also for schools and colleges. The Committee concluded that, despite a temporary extension of funding for certain qualifications until 2027, "the sector remains in limbo, without the clarity it needs to plan ahead," and that the review process itself lacked sufficient transparency and consultation.

In relation to T Levels specifically, the inquiry found a lack of understanding among employers, students and parents, noting that limited familiarity can make it more difficult for young people to make informed decisions and for employers to accept the qualification.⁶ When qualifications are reformed, paused, withdrawn or replaced within relatively short timeframes, it becomes harder for students to view these routes as stable foundations for their future careers. For those already navigating complex post-16 choices, such instability can reinforce hesitancy and reduce confidence in committing to vocational options, particularly in sectors like construction where awareness and established pathways are still developing. In this context, policy continuity is not merely an administrative concern; it plays a direct role in shaping perceptions of reliability, credibility, and long-term opportunity.

These developments sit against a backdrop of longstanding concern about NEET levels. As noted in CIOB's 2014 cross-party [No More Lost Generations](#) report, the UK has historically struggled to translate major construction programmes into accessible and attractive training routes for young people. Despite repeated reforms and funding initiatives, the core challenges identified more than a decade ago, such as weak alignment between training provision and available jobs, high apprenticeship drop-out rates, and structural disincentives for firms to invest in long-term workforce development have persisted.⁷ The number of young people who are Not in Education, Employment, or Training (NEET) has remained broadly consistent over this period, and the construction sector has continued to face workforce shortages.

A more distinct shift in policy direction has emerged since the formation of the Labour government in 2024. Under Prime Minister Sir Keir Starmer, construction skills have been framed not simply as a component of wider skills reform, but as a strategic priority in their own right.⁸ This reflects the government's wider programme, including the commitment to deliver 1.5 million new homes in England by 2029, support new towns, and accelerate energy and transport infrastructure projects. Meeting these ambitions requires a substantial expansion of the construction workforce.

Since 2024, we have seen a more explicit and coordinated focus on construction pathways. This includes significant investment announcements aimed at expanding training capacity, reforms to apprenticeship funding to increase access for under-25s and SMEs, the introduction of foundation apprenticeships, and the linking of public procurement (such as school building programmes) to apprenticeship and T Level placement requirements. The reintroduction and expansion of construction-specific T Levels from 2025 onwards also signals a clearer commitment to embedding construction within the technical education offer.

Outside of T Levels, the Government has recently introduced two new initiatives with a more explicit focus on construction. The Homebuilding Skills Hubs were announced in 2024 as part of a wider package of measures to accelerate housebuilding and address labour shortages across the residential construction sector. Backed by Government funding and delivered in partnership with industry, the programme aims to expand training capacity, support new entrants and upskill existing workers in key homebuilding trades.⁹ Technical Excellence Colleges (TECs), introduced from 2025, were established as specialist further education providers focused on delivering high-quality technical training aligned to local and national skills needs, including in construction and the built environment. Unlike earlier system-wide reforms, both initiatives signal a more targeted attempt to strengthen sector-specific training pipelines, although their long-term impact will depend on sustained funding, employer engagement and public awareness.¹⁰

This marks a departure from the broader 'sector neutral' reforms of the previous decade. For the first time in many years, there is a coherent policy narrative that positions construction not only as an economic necessity, but as a viable and actively promoted career pathway for young people.

Against this backdrop, the findings of this Attitudes Survey are particularly timely. If the past decade has demonstrated the limits of generalised skills reform in addressing construction recruitment challenges, the coming years may test whether a more direct and sustained policy push can shift perceptions and participation.

By examining the views of young people and parents at this moment of renewed governmental focus, this report provides a baseline against which future progress can be measured. It is our hope that, as policy direction becomes clearer and more construction-specific, subsequent editions of this survey will be able to track measurable improvements in awareness, interest and confidence in construction careers.

⁴ Department for Business and Trade (DBT), [Industrial Strategy](#), 23 June 2025

⁵ Institute for Employment Studies (IES), [Skills Bootcamps and Adult Skills: An overview of the current provision and availability of information](#), March 2024

⁶ Education Select Committee, [Further Education and Skills, Sixth Report of Session 2024-26](#), 23 September 2025

⁷ CIOB, [No More Lost Generations](#), February 2014

⁸ HM Treasury, [Government unleashes next generation of construction workers to build 1.5m homes](#), 23 March 2025

⁹ Gov.uk, [New skills hubs launched to get Britain building](#), 22 November 2024

¹⁰ Department for Education (DfE), [40,000 people to get skills in new Technical Excellence Colleges](#), 12 August 2025

Survey Methodology and Sample

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

The parents' data was collected between 3 February 2026 and 9 February 2026. The young people data was collected between 3 February 2026 and 9 February 2026.

[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 includes 1,221 females, 780 males with child(ren) aged between 16 and 24. Responses were gathered from all English regions, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales.

Young People Survey Demographics

The sample includes 1,453 females and 547 males. 1,073 respondents were in the 16-20 age bracket and 927 in the 21-24 age bracket. Responses were gathered from all English regions, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales.

Limitations of Survey

When interpreting this data, it must be noted that a 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 provide 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.

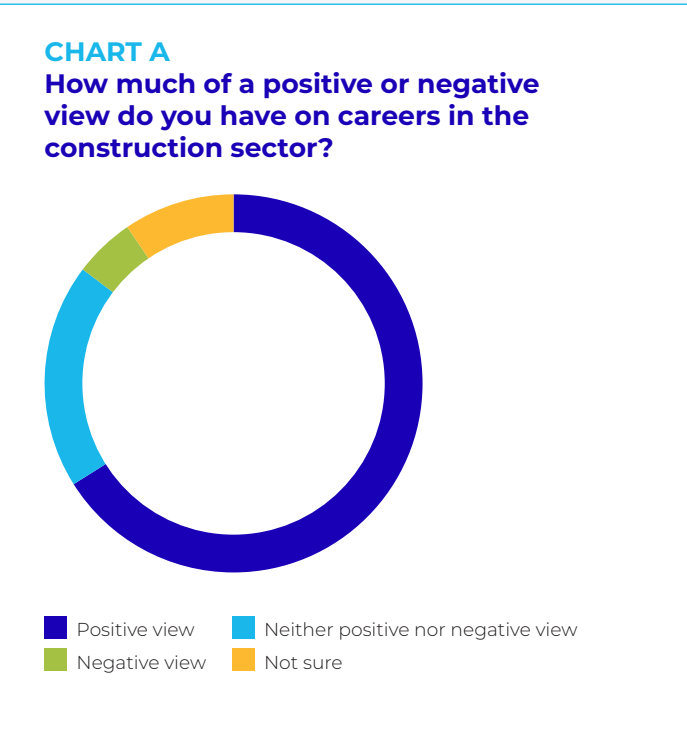
These limitations must be acknowledged when interpreting the survey results contained in this report.

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

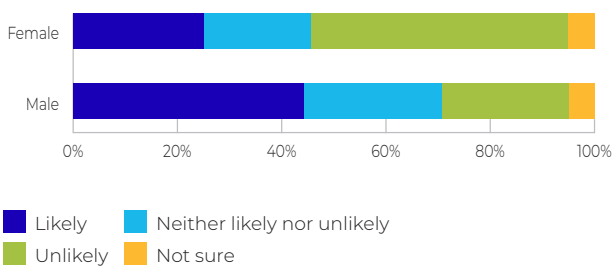
The majority of young people aged 16-24 once again held a positive view towards a career in the construction sector (66% 2026 vs 68% 2025). This overall positive attitude of young people towards careers in the construction sector is highly encouraging considering the long-standing concern that construction jobs are viewed in a poor light.



- **66%** of young people aged 16-24 reported holding a positive view towards a career in the construction sector, and only **5%** reported a negative view.
- Males held a more positive view towards careers in the construction sector than females (**74% vs 63%**).

Survey Results and Analysis

CHART B
How likely, or unlikely, are you to pursue a career in the construction sector?



As shown in Chart B, male respondents are more likely to consider pursuing a career in construction than women, with 44% of males likely to pursue a career in the sector compared to 25% of females. This is an expected result given the low level of gender diversity in the sector, particularly 'on-site' roles.

Of those not already working in construction, a third of young people surveyed said they were likely to pursue a career in the sector. Compared with last year's data, there has been little change in interest (30% 2026 vs 31% 2025). This should continue to be positive reading for the construction sector.

Separately, the construction sector being unsafe featured eighth in the list of reasons for not wanting to pursue a career in the sector. This was listed as the third main reason in the 2025 survey (15% 2026 vs 22% 2025). Although this is only a fall of 7 percentage points, it should be viewed as positive news that it is not seen as one of the primary barriers to entry for young people.

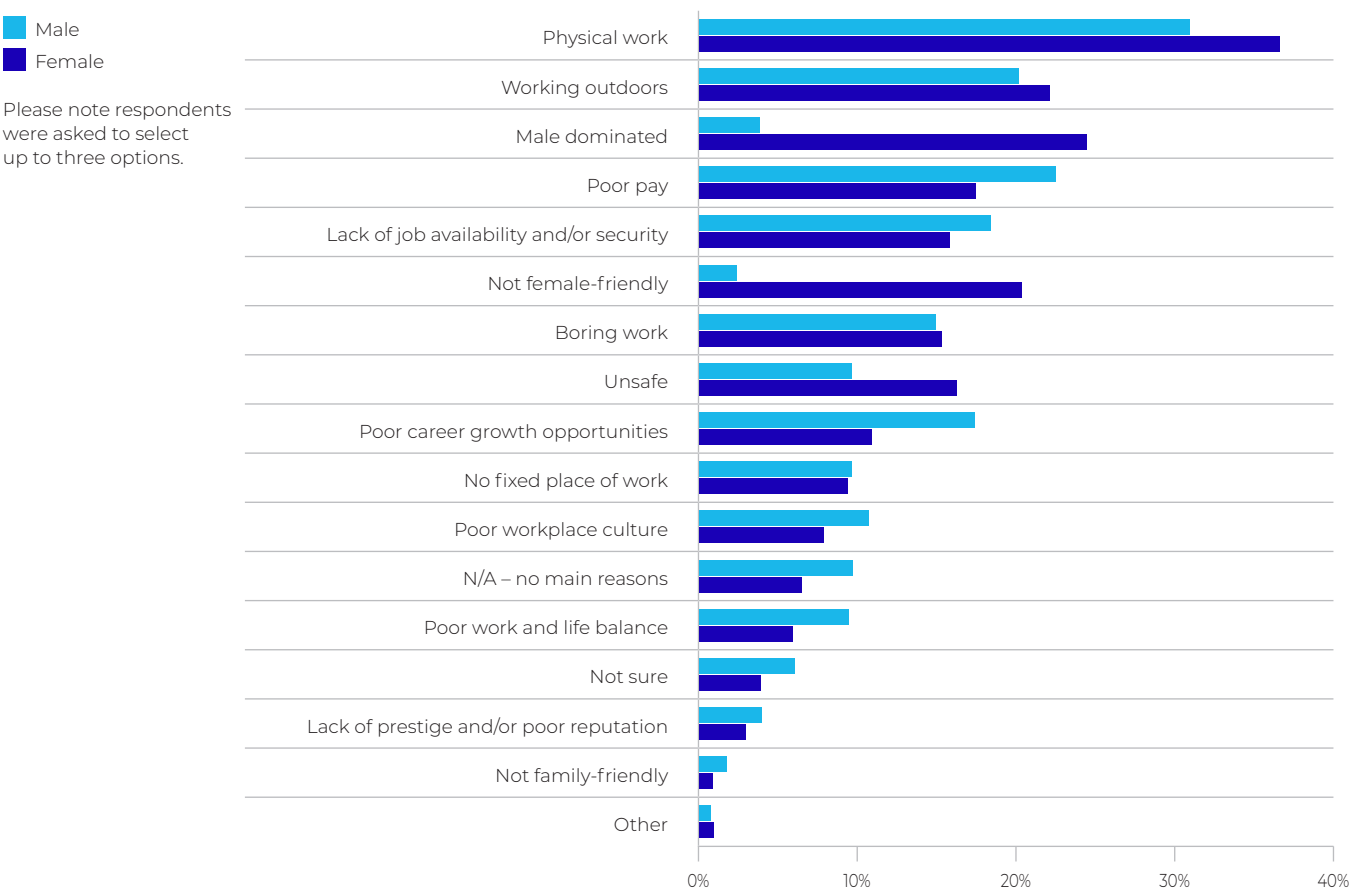
Respondents aged 21-24 had both a slightly more positive view and a greater likelihood of joining the sector (33%) than those aged 16-20 (28%).

Young people who do not currently work in construction were asked the main reasons why they would not pursue a career in the construction sector. The top five most selected reasons were: that it involves 'physical work' (35%), involves 'working outdoors' (22%), is 'male dominated' (19%), offers 'poor pay' (19%) and is 'not female-friendly' (16%). This differs from the 2025 survey where respondents named 'male dominated' (33%), 'physical work' (28%) and 'unsafe' (22%) as the top three reasons.

It is understandable that respondents highlighted 'physical work' and 'working outdoors' as two of the most significant reasons for not pursuing a career in the construction sector. While a great deal of construction work does take place 'on-site', the sector is now much more diverse with roles that are office-based, site-based and a hybrid of the two.

The reasons for not pursuing construction careers were broadly aligned by gender, as shown in Chart C. For males, the most common reasons given were: the sector has physical work, has poor pay and involves working outdoors. For females, the most common reasons were: the sector has physical work, is male dominated, and involves working outdoors.

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



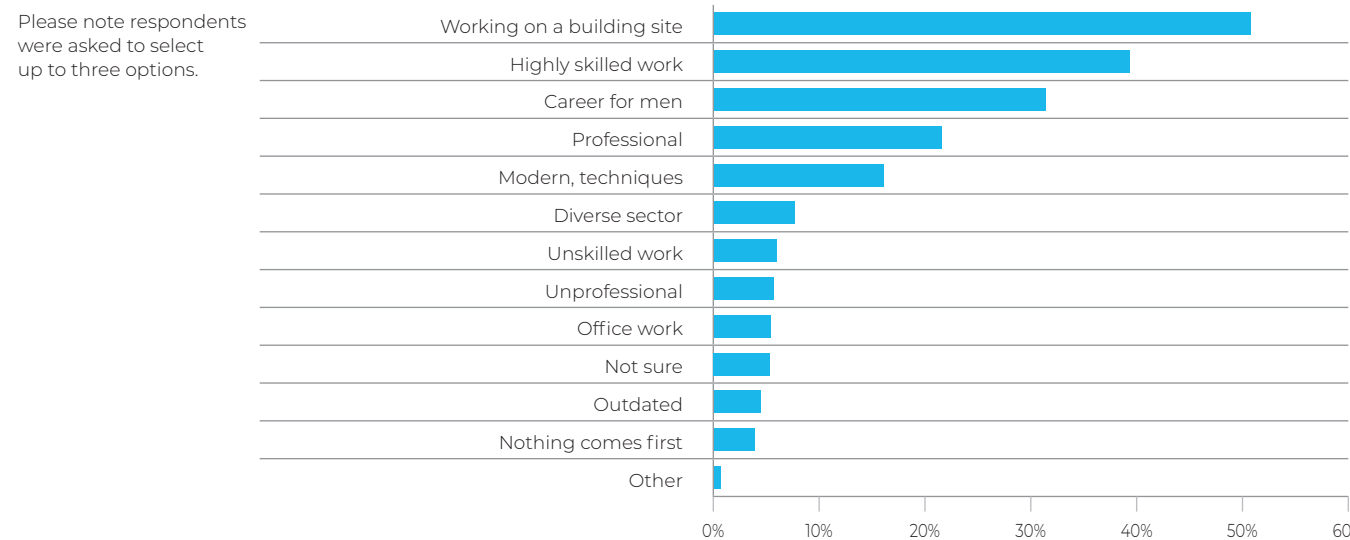
Survey Results and Analysis

Young People's Perceptions of 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.

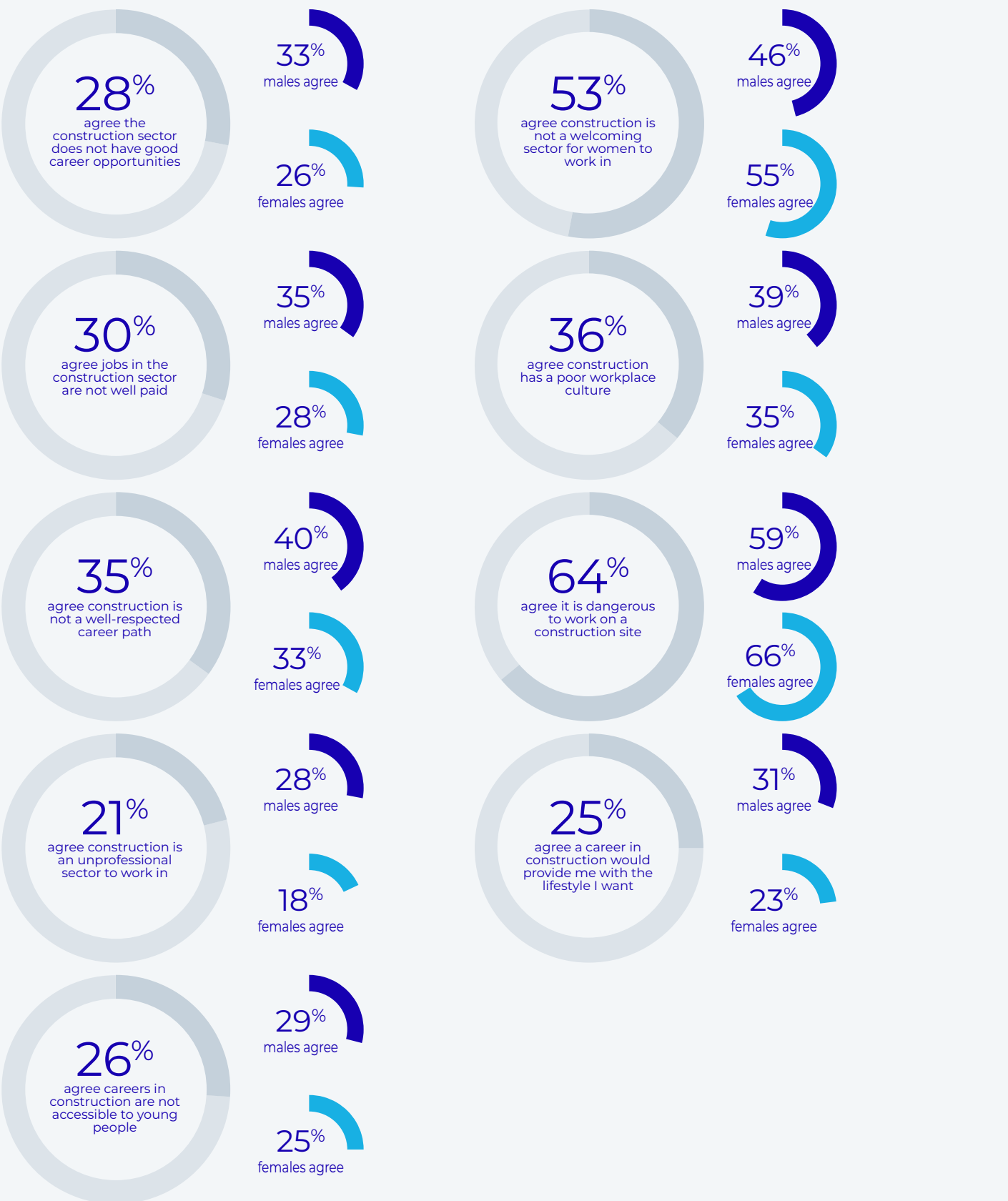
CHART D
When thinking about careers in the construction sector what, if anything, first comes to mind?



These results closely mirror the 2025 survey. Understandably, over half of respondents associate careers in construction with working on a building site. Positively, respondents broadly see construction as a highly skilled and professional career, both of which are areas the construction industry continues to make progress in, particularly through trade and chartered organisations and networks.

In-line with the 2025 survey, once again, over a third of young people first think of construction careers as 'careers for men', but this is still understandable given the longstanding low levels of gender diversity in the sector, particularly 'on-site' construction as opposed to more office-based roles.

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.



Survey Results and Analysis

Broadly speaking, the data from the 2026 survey is consistent with the views given by young people in the 2025 survey.

Notably, there was a small decrease in the view that the construction sector does not have good career opportunities (28% 2026 vs 31% 2025) and careers in construction are not accessible to young people (26% 2026 vs 28% 2025). Although small, opening access to the profession and having clear routes to progression are crucial for scaling up the numbers entering the sector.

Although perceptions about the dangers of working on construction sites remain, this should not be seen as a barrier to entry (as noted on page 10).

By its very nature, construction work does carry significant risks, such as working with heavy machinery, working at height as well as noise, vibration and hazardous substance exposure. However, progress in raising awareness and finding solutions to these dangers continues to be at the forefront of the sector. Progress is also being made to reduce on-site fatalities and major injuries. However, in 2024-25, there were still 35 fatal injuries to workers in Great Britain, down from 45 in 2022-23. Although the construction sector continues to make great strides to improve its record, it remains 4.8 times higher than all other industries. Unfortunately, there are still an average of 50,000 cases of non-fatal injuries per annum,¹¹ showing that further progress is still required and concerns about the sector being dangerous are justified.

It is important to note, however, that not all roles in construction are site-based. A significant proportion of careers in the sector are professional, technical, or office-based and do not involve the same exposure to physical hazards as on-site roles. The perception that construction is universally dangerous can therefore obscure the diversity of working environments across the industry. Raising greater awareness of the range of roles available, including those in project management, digital and technology, design, and health and safety, will be important in ensuring safety concerns do not deter individuals from considering career paths where the risk profile differs substantially from traditional site work.

Young women were once again more likely to state that construction is not a welcoming sector for women. Linked to these concerns, research by the British Standards Institute has shown 46% British women who have been supplied personal protective equipment (PPE) or uniform have been supplied something that does not fit.¹² CIOB has campaigned for ensuring appropriate PPE is provided that fits the wearer properly, regardless of their gender, culture, religion, size or shape and is safe and compliant with health and safety regulations. This campaign has led to the creation of a new British Standard (BS 30417) to address critical gaps in PPE fit in a long-awaited move designed to help struggling sectors recruit and retain workers and ultimately enhance safety at work.¹³

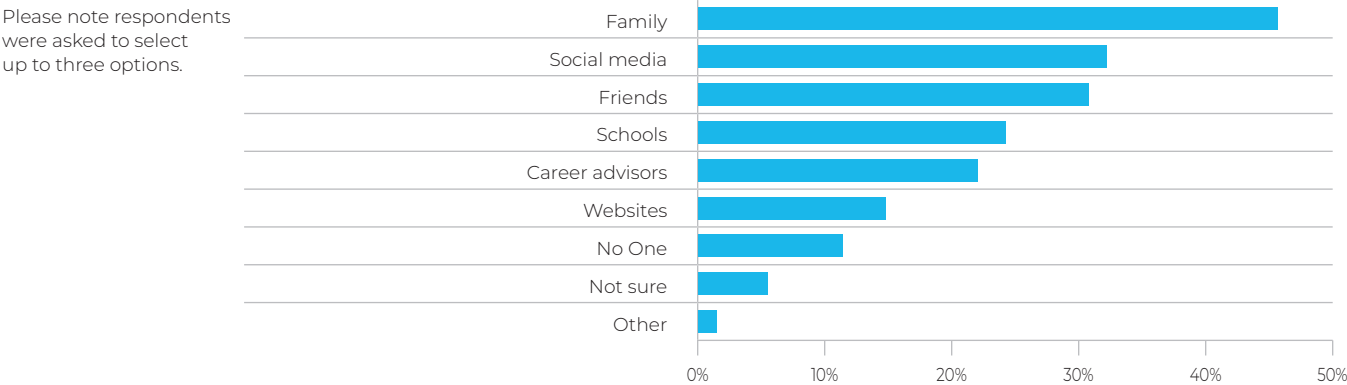
Sources of Influence on Young People’s Career Choices in Construction

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 social media, friends, and schools.

When compared to the 2025 survey, the number of young people who chose families fell slightly (46% 2026 vs 50% 2025). However, the largest increase was the numbers of people who indicated social media (32% 2026 vs 26% 2025), surpassing friends as the greatest source of influence on young people’s careers choices (Chart E).

These findings align with research by the Association of the British Pharmaceutical Industry which has revealed that over one in three young people have used social media to inform a career or job decision.¹⁴ This growth suggests the evolving landscape and an area the construction sector should consider when embarking on recruitment drives.

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



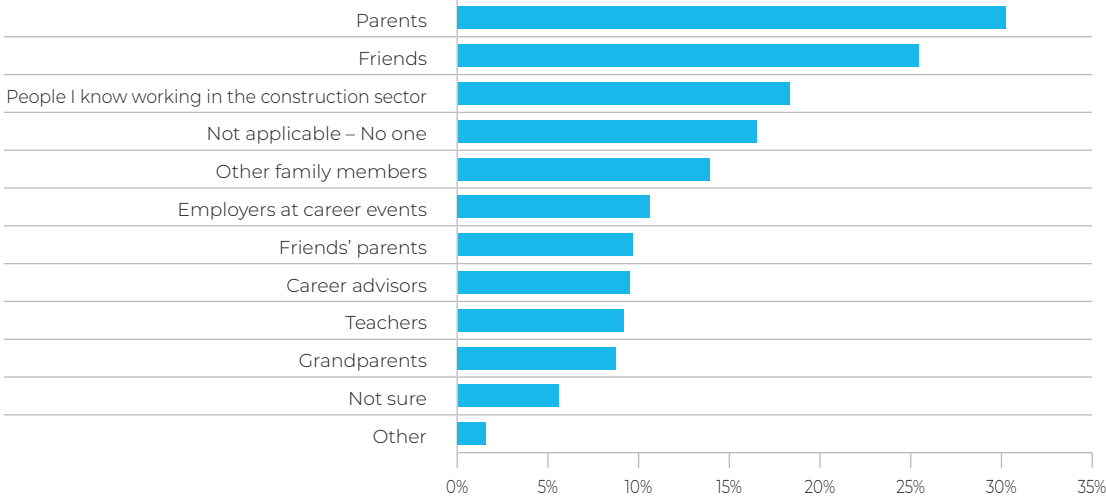
¹¹ Health & Safety Executive (HSE), [Construction statistics in Great Britain, 2025](#), 20 November 2025
¹² British Standards Institute (BSI), [BSI launched new standard to address critical gaps in PPE fit](#), 16 September 2025
¹³ BSI, [BS 30417 Provision of inclusive personal protective equipment \(PPE\) – Guide](#), 16 September 2025
¹⁴ Association of the British Pharmaceutical Industry (ABPI), [Engaging with Gen Z: cultivating a diverse talent pipeline](#), 4 June 2025

Survey Results and Analysis

When asked who shaped their view on construction careers specifically, respondents said they are most influenced by their parents, friends and people they know working in the construction sector (Chart F). These figures closely mirror the 2025 survey, and these groups hold a higher level of influence than teachers, careers advisors and employers at careers events. This, once again, suggests 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 mechanisms.

CHART F
Greatest sources of influence on young people's view of construction careers

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



This high level of parental influence on career decision-making is also echoed by parents, with 68% of parents with children aged 16-24 stating their child actively seeks advice on career choices.

Furthermore, nearly three quarters (72%) of parents state they regularly start conversations with their child on future career options.

Parental Perceptions of Construction Careers

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

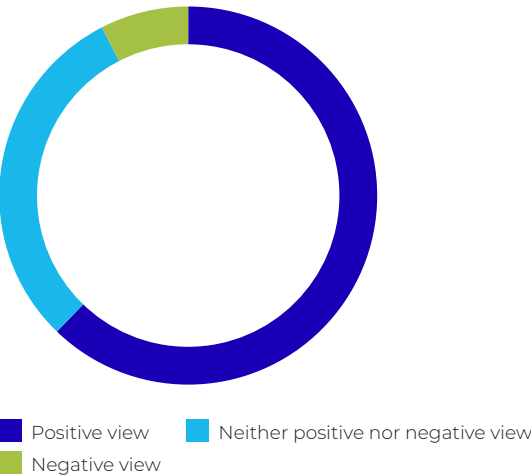
Parents were significantly more likely to have a positive view of construction careers than negative. As shown in Chart G, over two thirds (62%) of parents surveyed have a positive view on careers in the construction sector, while only 8% had a negative view. More male parents (65%) held a positive view on construction careers than female parents (60%).

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 (53% parents vs 29% of young people).

There is also a significant discrepancy between views on accessibility to construction careers. With around 14% of adults feeling that careers in construction are not accessible to young people compared to over a quarter of young people (26%).

Once again, as with the 2025 survey, it was encouraging to see only 11% of parents agree that construction is an unprofessional sector to work in, with 65% of parents disagreeing. 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 perform 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.

CHART G
Overall positivity of parents' perception of construction careers



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

16% agree the construction sector does not have good career opportunities	53% disagree
50% agree it is dangerous to work on a construction site	20% disagree
21% agree construction is not a well-respected career path	50% disagree
41% agree construction is not a welcoming sector for women to work in	27% disagree
26% agree construction has a poor workplace culture	33% disagree
14% agree careers in construction are not accessible to young people	54% disagree
11% agree construction is an unprofessional sector to work in	65% disagree

Finally, parents highlighted similar concerns to young people, notably the inherent health and safety risks on construction sites and the construction sector not being welcoming for women to work in. However, both viewpoints were held to a lesser extent than the cohort of young people surveyed.

Survey Results and Analysis

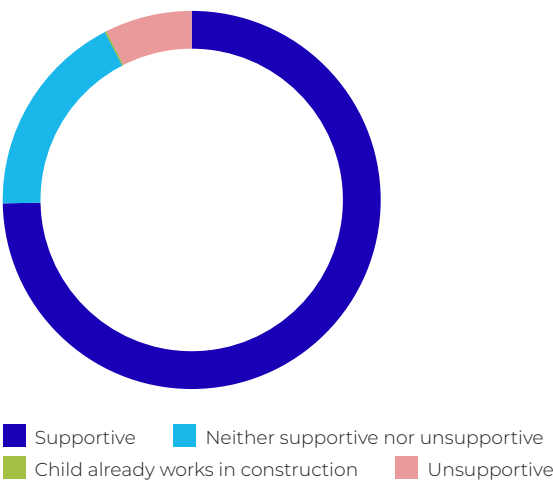
Parental Attitude to their Children Pursuing Construction Careers

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 towards their child potentially working in construction.

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

- 75% of parents agree they would be supportive of their child pursuing a career in the construction sector, and only 7% would be unsupportive (as shown in Chart H).
- Only 7% of parents agree they would be embarrassed if their child pursued a career in construction, whilst 78% disagree.
- When asked what sectors the parent most want their child to work in, construction was the second most popular option (21%), only behind computing and technology (28%), and business and finance (21%).

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



This level of support for pursuing a career in construction should be a positive reading for the sector, and despite the small drop from the 2025 survey (75% 2026 vs 79% 2025) the sector continues to be viewed favorably.

17% agree that jobs in the construction sector are not well paid	49% disagree
42% agree that they would like their child to earn while they learn instead of going to university	22% disagree

Of course, many parents would be supportive of their child's career choices, regardless of the sector. However, there may be other reasons for broader support, such as earning potential. Nearly half (49%) of parents believe jobs in the construction sector are well paid (compared to a quarter of young people surveyed (24%).

Average earnings in construction are generally strong, and higher than the national average. 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 £33,000 across all other sectors.¹⁵

Another reason for supporting careers in construction, which was discussed in detail in the 2025 report, was that 42% of parents surveyed agree they would rather their child 'earn while they learn' instead of going to university (with 22% disagreeing).

With tuition fees in England and Wales now costing approximately £9,535 a year for standard full-time courses, and the additional accommodation and living expenses, it is understandable that parents are open to alternative educational offerings for their children.

Additionally, figures from the Institute of Student Employers show that competition for graduate jobs has reached a record high, with a 15% rise in applications reported in 2024 and a 32% increase in 2023, highlighting a clear upward trend in graduate job applications. Aligned to this was graduate recruitment falling by 8% between 2024 and 2025, marking the weakest year for graduate hiring since 2021.¹⁶

Construction could also be seen as being a relatively 'stable' industry, despite the market volatility that it repeatedly faces caused by the cyclical boom and bust nature of the sector and wider economy. However, trade-based roles such as carpenters, electricians, gas engineers and plumbers tend to be a stable fixture and continue to be in high demand. Furthermore, the Government has placed construction as a foundational sector within the Industrial Strategy, thus highlighting the key role housing and infrastructure has to play during this parliament.

Job stability may also be further linked to the rise of Artificial Intelligence and concerns about displacing or restructuring roles. This topic warrants further investigation in future editions of this survey.

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 child. Only 42% of parents said they are likely to recommend a construction career to their child, and 25% 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', are not 'female-friendly', involve 'working outdoors' and are 'unsafe' (in decreasing order of frequency). These reasons closely matched the reasons why young people said they would not pursue a career in the sector.

Though most parents reported they would be supportive of their children pursuing careers in construction, young people did not always view this as the case. 26% of young people agreed their parents would not support a career in construction (down from 29% in 2025), though a higher percentage of young men held this view than young women (30% vs 25%).

Moreover, 24% 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 than young women (28% vs 22%). Conversely, only 7% of parents said they would be embarrassed if their child pursued a career in construction.

¹⁵ CIOB, [Real Face of Construction 2023](#), April 2023
¹⁶ Institute of Student Employers (ISE), [Student Recruitment Survey 2025](#), October 2025

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Careers Advice on Construction

Careers advice is a more formal mechanism to inform young people of their options for different career paths. As highlighted in Chart E in this report, schools and career advisors have a prominent role in influencing career choices, although falling behind family, social media and friends.

In England, schools and colleges must ensure young people have the careers education, information and guidance to follow a pathway that is right for them and aligns with employment opportunities. This guidance must also be based on the Gatsby Benchmarks, a framework of eight evidence-based standards to define world-class careers guidance for young people. However, despite this model, careers advice and guidance vary greatly between schools.

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

- 45% of all young people surveyed agreed that construction careers were not covered in the careers advice they received (47% 2025 survey).
- The proportion of young men and young women who agreed construction had not been covered in careers advice was comparatively similar (42% and 46% respectively).
- The 16-20 cohort and 21-24 cohort who agreed construction had not been covered in careers advice differed, which could suggest improvements are taking place amongst the younger generation (43% and 48% respectively).
- 44% of all parents surveyed feel ‘under-informed’ about modern career options.

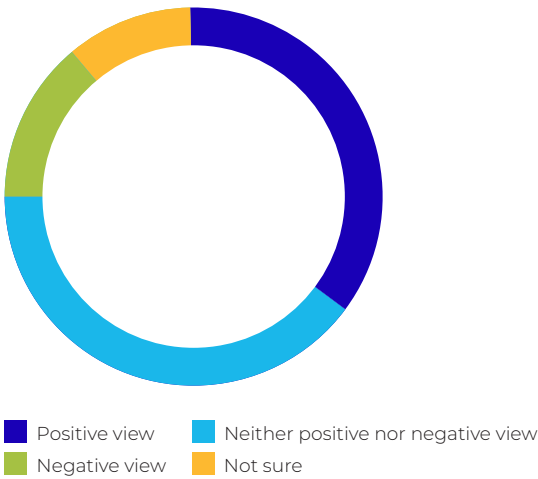
This result indicates a large pool of potential talent is not receiving any formal information about careers in the construction sector.

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 (1,097 respondents), 40% (36% 2025) said construction careers were portrayed positively by careers advisors, as shown in Chart I. Conversely, 11% (11% 2025) of young people said these careers were portrayed negatively. This is a small, but welcome improvement, given historical, and often outdated, perceptions of the construction sector.

Finally, 44% of parents stated that they feel ‘under-informed’ about modern career options for their children. This lack of guidance could risk outdated perceptions about careers being passed on as well as missing key information needed to help their child pursue a career in areas such as digital transformation or sustainability, amongst others. Given the range of career options and sectors available in construction, there is a clear need to help bridge the information gap and provide parents with more up-to-date guidance on the career options available and routes to entry.

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



Young People’s Career Preferences

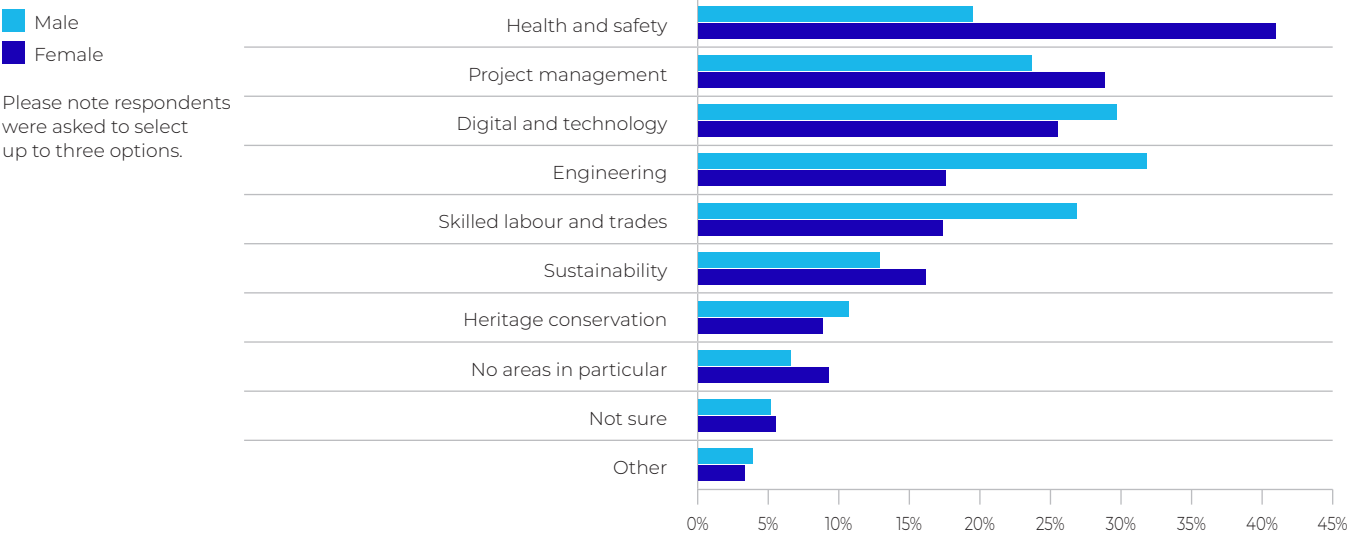
Respondents were also asked to select three areas of work they were most interested in working in from a selection of areas that feature in various construction careers. The most popular areas young people chose were health and safety, project management, and digital and technology.

The order of preferences altered slightly from the 2025 survey, with health and safety (35% 2026 vs 29% 2025) replacing digital and technology (27% 2026 vs 31% 2025) and project management (27% 2026 vs 29% 2025) as the leading preferences.

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 skilled labour and trades. For young women, health and safety, project management, and digital and technology, were the areas of most interest.

It is also worth examining the largest discrepancies in areas of work that young men and young women would be most interested in. Notably, health and safety (20% men vs 41% women) and ‘engineering’ (32% men vs 18% women) both had significant gender imbalance and would warrant further investigation to understand the reasoning.

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



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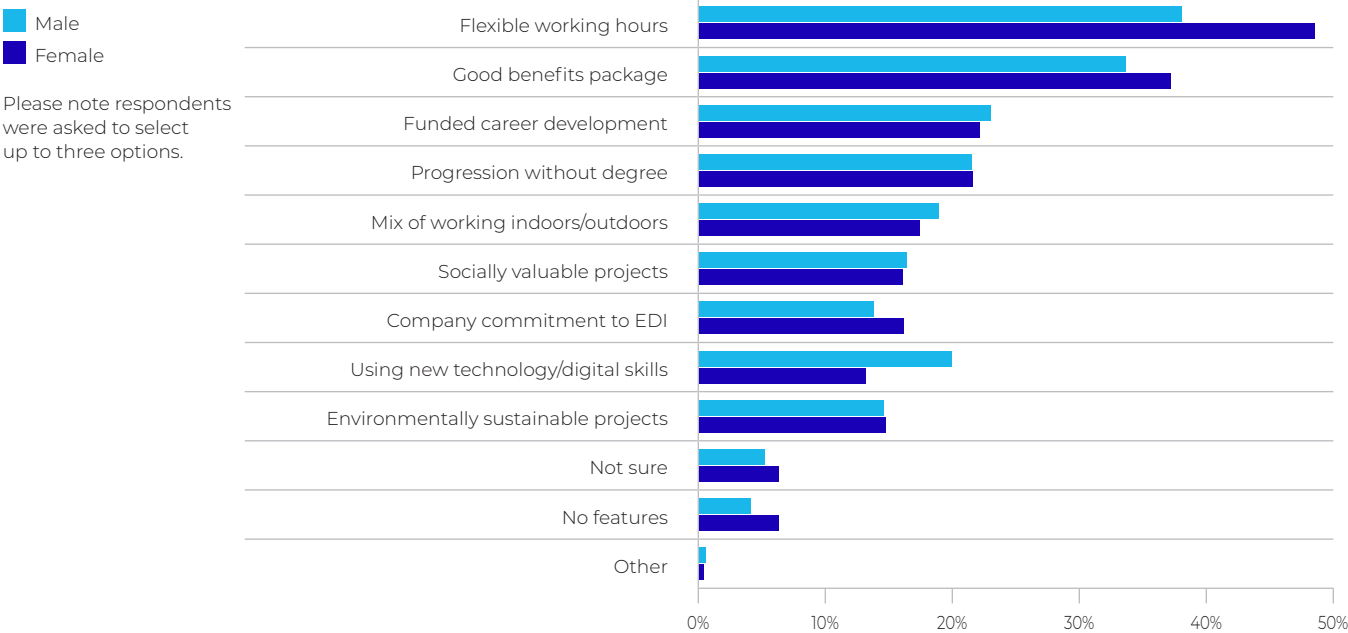
Similarly to the 2025 survey, when presented a set of options of what features offered by an employer would make them most likely to apply for a job, young people reported flexible working hours, a good benefits package, and career development paid for by an employer as the most attractive features in a role, in descending popularity.

As shown in Chart K, the top three features were the same for both males and females, though 48% of young women chose flexible working hours compared to 37% of young men.

As noted in the 2025 report, flexible working hours in site-based construction roles can be challenging given its location-based work, inter-dependent team roles and rules and guidance on noise and disturbance. However, flexibility does not just mean remote working or reduced hours, but greater pragmatism and understanding about other priorities.

Progress in this space continues to be made in the construction sector, particularly in the hybrid-working model. Timewise has already undertaken several pilot projects to understand flexible working arrangements, which featured involvement from several major contractors such as Bam, Skanska and Willmott Dixon.¹⁷

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



When offered the same set of options of what features offered by an employer would make their child most likely to apply for a job, parents of 16-24-year-olds reported good benefits package, career development paid by employer and flexible

working hours as the most attractive features in a role, in descending popularity. Thus, showcasing the wants are very similar between parents and young people surveyed.

Awareness, Engagement and Confidence in Construction Pathways

Our findings on awareness and engagement with construction-focused education and training programmes provide important context for the policy environment outlined earlier in this report. While recent governments have increased focus on skills and post-16 pathways provisions, with current government giving particular attention to construction, our data suggests that awareness and understanding of specific pathways remain uneven, and that engagement does not always follow recognition.

Among the 2,000 young people surveyed, 38% reported having heard of T Levels in construction, making them the most recognised programme listed. However, over a third (36%) had heard of none of the programmes at all, a striking finding given the level of government attention and investment in overall skills reform in recent years. Awareness of other initiatives was more modest: 17% had heard of Technical Excellence Colleges (TECs), 15% of Construction Skills Bootcamps, and 12% of the Homebuilding Skills Hub.

If students are uncertain about progression routes, employer recognition, or long-term stability of the qualification, hesitancy is a rational response.

For newer or more specialist initiatives such as the Homebuilding Skills Hub and Construction Skills Bootcamps, patterns are similar. Among those aware of the Homebuilding Skills Hub, 29% reported having used it and 48% had considered using it. For Construction Skills Bootcamps, 24% had used them and 51% had considered using them.

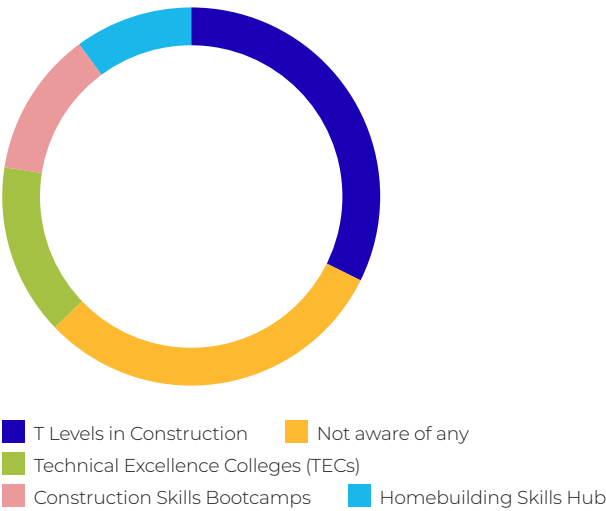
These figures suggest relatively high levels of consideration once awareness is achieved, particularly for Bootcamps, but limited overall reach due to lower awareness in the first place. In other words, the barrier appears less about perceived value among those who know about the schemes, and more about the scale, visibility and clarity of the offer across the wider population.

Technical Excellence Colleges (TECs) show a similar pattern: among those aware, 25% had used them and 39% had considered using them, while 36% had neither used nor considered them. Again, this indicates moderate engagement among those informed but limited systemic penetration overall.

Taken together, these findings reinforce the concerns highlighted in the Education Committee's inquiry. Where the post-16 landscape is perceived as shifting, with qualifications reviewed, extended temporarily, paused or replaced, young people may struggle to see technical pathways as stable foundations for their future careers.

Awareness without confidence does not translate into enrolment and even less so into completion. If students and their parents perceive uncertainty around long-term recognition, funding, or progression, this may contribute to a "wait-and-see" approach, particularly in comparison to the more established and consistently presented "tried and tested" academic routes.

CHART L
Young people's awareness of construction pathways



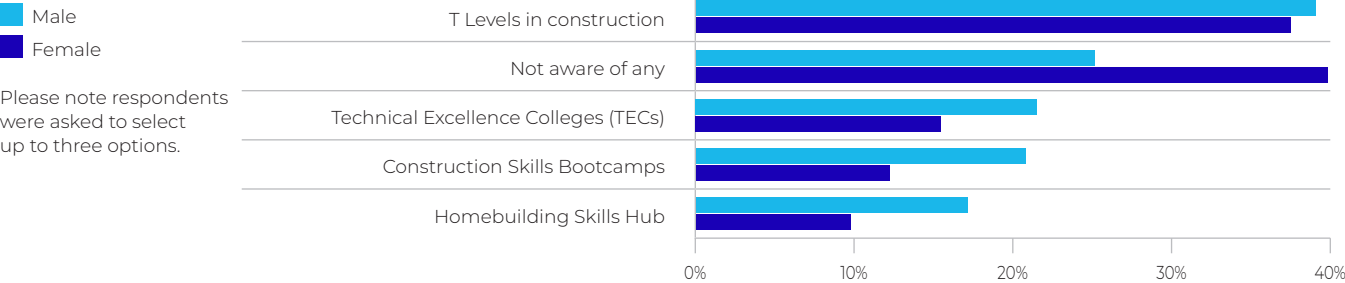
When awareness is compared with actual engagement, the picture becomes more revealing. Of those aware of T Levels in construction in the 16-20 age group, only 14% reported having used them, while 34% had considered using them. Half of them (52%) had neither used nor considered using a construction T Level. This suggests that, even where awareness exists, conversion into action remains limited.

The Education Committee's finding that there is a lack of understanding of T Levels among students, parents and employers provides a useful explanation here: familiarity does not necessarily equate to clarity.

¹⁷ Timewise, [Making Construction a Great Place to Work: Can Flexible Working Help?](#), 1 November 2022

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CHART M
Awareness of construction pathways by gender



The gender differences in awareness are also notable. While awareness of construction T Levels is broadly similar between males (39%) and females (38%), a significantly higher proportion of females (40%) reported having heard of none of the programmes, compared to 25% of males. Males were more likely to be aware of Technical Excellence Colleges (22% vs 16%), Construction Skills Bootcamps (21% vs 12%), and the Homebuilding Skills Hub (17% vs 10%).

Several factors may contribute to this disparity. First, longstanding gender stereotypes around construction as a male-dominated industry may influence the targeting of information, informal networks, and even the likelihood that young women perceive such opportunities as relevant to them. If technical and vocational routes are already presented less prominently than academic ones, this disparity may be compounded for female students in sectors traditionally perceived as male led. Second, employer engagement, school careers guidance, and peer networks may expose male students more frequently to construction-related messaging. Finally, confidence and self-identification play a role: if young women are less likely to see construction as aligned with their identity or aspirations, they may be less attuned to related programmes, even when information is available.

Parents’ awareness and engagement mirror many of these patterns and underline the importance of clarity and confidence in shaping career decisions. Among the 2,001 parents surveyed, awareness was highest for T Levels in construction, with 35% reporting that they had heard of them. However, only 14% had discussed enrolling on such a programme with their child. Over half (51%) had neither heard of nor discussed construction T Levels.

Awareness of the other programmes was lower still. Only one third (30%) of parents had heard of Technical Excellence Colleges (TECs), 15% had heard of Construction Skills Bootcamps, and 14%

had heard of the Homebuilding Skills Hub. Discussion levels were significantly lower across the board: 14% had discussed TECs with their child, 8% had discussed Bootcamps, and 9% had discussed the Homebuilding Skills Hub. In each case, over three quarters of parents had neither heard of nor discussed the programme.

Given the influential role parents often play in young people’s career decision-making (see page 15/Chart E), these findings are significant. Even where awareness exists, discussion rates remain comparatively low, suggesting that recognition does not necessarily equate to understanding or endorsement. In a context where vocational pathways have undergone repeated reform and where technical routes are presented differently and often less prominently than academic ones, parents may feel less equipped to advise confidently.

Overall, the data reinforces a central theme of this report: policy ambition must be matched by stability, clarity and sustained communication if it is to shift perceptions and participation.

The renewed focus on construction pathways since 2024 represents an important opportunity. However, for that focus to translate into greater uptake, young people and their parents must see these routes as viable, well-understood and reliable foundations for long-term career progression.

Of course, raising awareness of the different pathways will take several years to establish. But crucially, Government must understand the current environment and learn previous lessons from stop-start initiatives if it is to help establish opportunities for young people.

Future editions of this survey will help assess whether sustained policy direction leads not only to improved awareness, but to deeper confidence and increased participation in construction careers.

Attitudes of Young Women Towards Construction Careers

As shown in Chart B (page 10), male respondents are significantly more likely than female respondents to consider pursuing a career in construction. While 44% of young men say they would be likely to pursue a career in the sector, this falls to just 25% of young women.

This disparity mirrors the wider composition of the UK construction workforce. Women currently make up around 15% of the total construction workforce, with representation heavily concentrated in professional, technical and administrative roles. In contrast, on-site manual and skilled trades roles remain between 1–2% female. Although there has been gradual growth over the past decade, progress remains uneven.

The Federation of Master Builders has highlighted that female participation has increased by only around 4% over 10 years, underlining the slow pace of structural change.¹⁸ Apprenticeship entry reflects a similar pattern, with women accounting for approximately 10% of new construction apprentices in 2022–23, up modestly from 8% previously.¹⁹

Our survey findings suggest these workforce patterns are closely linked to perceptions formed early in young women’s career journeys. Parental influence appears to play a notable role. Among parents surveyed, those with daughters were more likely to have discussed university routes (60% for daughters compared to 51% for sons) and less likely to have discussed apprenticeships (53% for daughters compared to 62% for sons). Given the well-established influence of family on career decisions, this difference in emphasis is significant. It suggests that young women may be channeled, consciously or unconsciously, towards traditional academic pathways, while vocational and trade routes are more frequently normalised for young men.

This divergence is further reflected in parents’ overall attitudes towards the sector. While around 8% of parents overall reported holding a negative view of construction careers, a notable gender difference emerges when broken down by the gender of their child. Among parents of sons, 67% reported holding a positive view of construction careers, compared to just 57% of parents with daughters. This gap suggests parental perceptions of suitability may be shaped, at least in part, by gendered assumptions about the sector. Where construction is viewed as more appropriate for boys

than girls, this bias may subtly shape the advice and encouragement children receive, perpetuating the very workforce imbalances the sector is seeking to address.

This is reinforced by awareness levels: 40% of young women reported not having heard of any of the three new construction programmes tested in the survey, compared to 25% of young men. Lower exposure inevitably constrains aspiration.

Perceptions of the sector further illuminate this gap. When asked what first comes to mind when thinking about construction careers, young women most frequently cited working on a building site (55%), highly skilled work (41%), and career for men (34%). The prominence of “career for men” as a spontaneous association is particularly telling. Construction continues to be framed in gendered terms, with site-based, physically demanding imagery dominating understanding of the sector. This narrow perception obscures the breadth of professional roles available across design, digital construction, project management, sustainability and modern methods of construction.

These perceptions translate directly into stated barriers. Young women’s leading reasons for not considering construction were physical work (37%), male dominated (25%), not female-friendly (21%) and working outdoors (22%). Safety concerns were also more pronounced among female respondents, with 16% citing construction as unsafe compared to 10% of young men. Together, these responses point not simply to misconceptions about the nature of the work, but to deeper concerns about workplace culture, belonging and wellbeing.

It is notable, however, that women expressed particularly strong interest in working in health and safety roles within construction, with over a third (41%) selecting this option, the highest proportion across all role types tested. This may suggest that while safety concerns exist, there is also a desire

¹⁸ Federation of Master Builders (FMB), [Deconstructing barriers for women in construction](#), 7 March 2023
¹⁹ House of Commons Library, [Women and the Economy](#), 28 February 2025

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among young women to contribute to improving standards and workplace culture. Greater visibility of women in health and safety leadership and compliance roles could therefore play an important part in building confidence and signaling the sector is serious about creating safer, more inclusive working environments.

Young women also place greater emphasis on employment conditions and culture. Nearly half (48%) said flexible hours were important to them, compared to 38% of young men. They were also slightly more likely to prioritise good benefit packages and to value a company's commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI). These findings may reflect the disproportionate caring responsibilities that women continue to shoulder, as well as a heightened awareness of the challenges of entering male-dominated environments. They also suggest that improving female participation is not solely a question of recruitment messaging, but of visible structural reform within firms and across the sector.

International experience demonstrates that targeted policy and industry action can shift both participation rates and perceptions. In Australia, the state of Victoria's Women in Construction Strategy, delivered by the Government of Victoria, combines procurement levers, funded training pathways and cultural reform initiatives to increase women's representation in trades. Projects receiving public funding are encouraged or required to demonstrate diverse outcomes, embedding gender inclusion within commissioning processes. At a national level, organisations such as the National Association of Women in Construction provide mentoring, networking and high-visibility campaigns such as Women in Construction Week, helping to normalise female leadership and technical expertise in the sector²⁰

Across Europe, projects under the Women Can Build banner, taking place in several countries, have promoted awareness campaigns, vocational outreach and storytelling initiatives that foreground female role models and challenge stereotypes around site work. Other initiatives frequently combine early school engagement, apprenticeship

reform and workplace culture standards, recognising that supply-side interventions must be matched by retention and progression strategies.

The findings of this survey suggest the UK faces a similar, multi-layered challenge. Young women's lower propensity to consider construction is not driven by a single factor, but by a combination of limited exposure, gendered assumptions, cultural concerns and perceived incompatibility with flexible working and family life. Addressing this will require coordinated action across schools, families, employers and policymakers.

First, awareness must be broadened. Communications should deliberately challenge the singular image of construction as exclusively site-based and physically demanding, highlighting digital, technical and professional pathways. Second, apprenticeship pathways must be presented as equally prestigious and viable for young women, with parents included in outreach efforts. Third, firms must demonstrate credible commitments to inclusive site cultures, flexible working arrangements and visible female leadership.

International evidence suggests that where gender equity is embedded in procurement policy, training design and industry leadership, participation can grow. The UK's slow progress over the past decade suggests that incremental change will not be sufficient. If the sector is to close the gender gap reflected in Chart B (page 10), it must move beyond encouragement alone and towards structural reform that makes construction not only accessible to young women, but actively welcoming.

²⁰ Victorian Government, Evaluation Report: Victorian Women in Construction Strategy, February 2024



Conclusions and Recommendations

The results of this second survey into attitudes and perceptions towards construction careers show views from both young people and parents remain positive overall.

Young people's views of the construction sector continue to be broadly positive, with a third of respondents reporting they would be likely to pursue a career in the construction sector.

Parents and family members also continue to have the most influence on young people's views on the sector and play an important role in their decision making.

Notably, over half of parents surveyed believed their child would most consider a 'good benefits package' as their number one priority when choosing a job. With nearly half of parents viewing jobs in the construction sector being well-paid and 42% stating a preference for their child to 'earn while they learn' instead of going to university the data suggest the cost of living could be a major factor in shaping opinion.

Young people listed familiar themes about construction careers being physically demanding and mainly consisting of working outdoors were prominent. Of course, there are valid reasons for these viewpoints, perhaps due to the limited awareness of the diverse range of career roles, from trades through to professional roles, such as construction managers, surveyors and architects in the sector.

These steps are particularly important to opening the sector to a broader range of young people, especially young women who once again highlighted they would be more unlikely to enter

the sector than young men. However, the survey does highlight some potential growth areas, most notably in the numbers of young women who would be interested in working in health and safety focused roles.

This report also examined awareness and engagement with construction-focused education and training programmes, specifically on relatively new skills and post-16 pathway provisions. The findings highlight that there is still a great deal of work to increase awareness and understanding and ultimately encourage young people to take these pathways. Allied with the fact that nearly half (45%) of young people surveyed reported that they had not received careers advice related to the construction sector whilst they were education, underpins the need for greater consistency and commitment to alternative routes to employment.

The current Labour Government has placed construction as a foundational sector within the UK's Industrial Strategy, underpinning housing delivery, infrastructure, energy transition and regional growth. Therefore, steps must be taken to ensure we have a skilled and competent workforce to fulfill these commitments.

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 Government

Introduce a national construction recruitment campaign:

Government should launch a high-profile, long-term national recruitment campaign for construction careers, similar in scale and ambition to campaigns supporting recruitment into the armed forces and teaching. The purpose of this campaign should be to raise awareness of the breadth of roles available in construction, clarify the routes into the sector, and promote construction as a stable and rewarding long-term career. Our findings demonstrate that awareness of specific initiatives and pathways remains limited among both young people and parents, highlighting the need for clear, coordinated national messaging.

Ensure stability and clarity in post-16 pathways:

Evidence presented during recent reviews of post-16 qualifications has shown that reform and uncertainty can create confusion among learners, parents and education providers. Now the Post-16 Education and Skills White Paper has been published, Government should prioritise continuity and stability across existing and forthcoming qualifications. Routes such as T Levels, and those due to be introduced such as V Levels, must be given the time and policy certainty required to build trust and credibility comparable to more established academic pathways. Frequent reform, pauses or changes to funding risk undermining confidence among prospective learners and employers alike.

Launch a national awareness campaign for T Levels and V Levels:

In addition to a broader recruitment campaign, the Department for Education should introduce a sustained awareness campaign specifically focused on T Levels and forthcoming V Levels, targeting students, parents and employers. The purpose, structure and progression opportunities of these qualifications should be clearly communicated from the secondary school stage onwards. Parity of esteem between A Levels, T Levels and V Levels must be embedded consistently across all communications, guidance and advice provided to schools, teachers, parents and students, so that technical pathways are not perceived as secondary options.

Create a single, integrated platform for post-16 applications and information:

Information about post-16 pathways remains fragmented, with no single platform covering both academic and vocational routes. Apprenticeship applications in particular can be complex, with regional inconsistencies and non-standardised vacancy availability. In addition, application timelines for vocational routes are often misaligned with university admissions, making it harder for young people to consider all options equally. This contributes to the perception that academic routes are more structured and accessible. In line with recommendations from the Education Committee, Government should expand the remit of UCAS to create a single source of information covering academic and vocational pathways. Application timelines for vocational courses, including apprenticeships, should better align with university admissions cycles.

Consideration should also be given to developing regional apprenticeship portals integrated with the national admissions service, enabling students to compare and apply for all routes simultaneously rather than being influenced by staggered deadlines.

²¹ Go Construct, www.goconstruct.org/construction-careers/browse-all-job-roles

Conclusions and Recommendations

Recommendations for Industry Stakeholders

Utilise social media to promote construction careers:

With social media continuing to grow as a source of influence on young people's career choices, industry stakeholders should work in partnership with Government to amplify any national construction recruitment campaign through coordinated social media activity. Our findings show that awareness of specific construction pathways remains limited, and social media presents a direct and scalable way to reach young people with clear, engaging content about roles, routes and progression opportunities. Consistent messaging across platforms will be essential to improving understanding and modernising perceptions of the sector.

Raise awareness of professional and specialist construction careers:

A significant proportion of young people continue to associate construction primarily with manual, physical and on-site work, and many cite poor pay as a deterrent. This perception is particularly strong among young women. However, respondents expressed the greatest interest in working in areas such as health and safety, project management, and digital and technology roles. These findings suggest that promoting professional, technical and non-manual occupations within the sector could widen the potential talent pool considerably. Greater visibility of these roles, alongside transparent information about salary progression and career development, would help challenge outdated assumptions and attract a broader range of entrants.

Whilst progress in this space has already been made through initiatives such as [CIOB Aspire](#) and [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.²¹ Additionally, industry should consider further opportunities to collaborate and ensure consistency and clarity in any messaging, particularly if a national construction recruitment campaign is to gain traction.

Make the sector more welcoming and attractive to women:

A large proportion of female respondents described construction as male dominated and not female friendly, which can act as a barrier to entry. Women also placed greater emphasis on flexible working, benefits packages and visible commitments to equality, diversity and inclusion when considering potential employers. Industry stakeholders should therefore continue efforts to improve workplace culture, highlight female role models, and communicate clearly about inclusive policies and progression opportunities. International examples, including progress made in Australia to increase women's participation in construction, demonstrate that targeted and sustained action can shift participation rates over time.

Explore opportunities adoption of flexible working hours:

Flexible working was identified as the single feature most likely to encourage young people, both male and female, to apply for a role in construction. While flexible arrangements are not always feasible across all roles due to the operational and safety requirements of construction work, there may be scope to expand flexibility in certain occupations, particularly in professional and office-based roles.

There has been consideration of the practical ways to adopt this method of working in construction by the Construction Leadership Council.²² Where flexibility cannot be offered, employers should consider strengthening other attractive features such as competitive benefits packages, clear career development pathways and supportive working environments.

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. Continued 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.

²² Construction Leadership Council (CLC), [Making Construction a Great Place to Work: Can Flexible Working Help? – Construction Leadership Council](#), 1 November 2022

**The Chartered
Institute of Building,**

3 Arlington Square,
Downshire Way,
Bracknell,
RG12 1WA, UK

Tel: +44 (0)1344 630 700

ciob.org

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(Scotland) SCO41725

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