
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Careers in Construction



February
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Successful recruitment practices must be implemented to overcome these challenges and concerns.



Foreword

The construction industry has long grappled with recruitment and retention challenges, exacerbated by skill shortages and a notable lack of diversity.

Across the UK economy job vacancies remain high and yet so do the numbers of working-age people who are unable to find work that fits their circumstances. The Government's plans to limit migration are likely to put further pressure on the need to fill vacancies. And over time, population change will see more retired people and fewer working-age people.

These issues, common across all sectors, underscore the importance of widening the appeal of the construction industry to a broader demographic, both in terms of size and diversity of the workforce.

We have emphasised in our Strategic Plan and Business Plan, the importance of attracting people at various stages, including education leavers, early-career professionals, career changers, and those re-entering the workforce.

To achieve this goal, the industry must identify the factors that make it attractive to various groups and understand how these preferences differ. It must effectively promote these factors to encourage people with the desired skills and characteristics to consider a career in construction.

It is also important to ensure that the industry's promotional efforts align with the actual experiences of individuals entering and staying in construction. This involves addressing the barriers to working in the construction sector and understanding what makes competitor industries more appealing.

Successful recruitment practices must be implemented to overcome these challenges and concerns. This will ensure not only initial attraction but also long-term retention and a sustained supply of people into the construction industry.



Lucie Wright
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Background

This Careers in Construction research builds on CITB's evidence-base that informs strategy and underpins industry skills planning. In 2022, CITB conducted [Rethinking Recruitment](#), which examined perspectives on what makes construction an attractive career choice, as well as the perceptions, misconceptions, and image of the industry.

CITB will next examine the circumstances, motivations, and constraints of people we have not understood before, with a focus on early years through to early secondary education. This will involve gaining a deeper understanding of the whole journey into a career in construction. It will also help us understand what, as an industry, we might do to establish a more diverse, fair, and capable future.

New audiences will include early years (aged 3-5), primary years (aged 5-11) and early secondary years (aged 11-14), as well as primary school teachers, people in vocational education, and those outside the labour market.

The analysis so far

This Careers in Construction research draws on primary evidence from a large number and wide range of stakeholders.

These include people working in the construction industry, both new entrants and established workers, as well as individuals outside of the construction industry, those working in other sectors, young people who are mostly still in education, parents of young people, and career guidance professionals.

The report gives us key insights from those inside and outside of construction to understand how careers in construction are perceived and experienced. It delivers Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) to support the monitoring and evaluation of CITB's careers activities with a broad range of stakeholders.



Key Findings

This analysis presents findings to help us better understand what might help support positive change, and track and support the following.

Attitudes, attraction, and awareness of the construction industry

Construction workers, both new and established, typically view the industry positively, valuing job security, competitive pay, progression opportunities, and the diversity of roles it offers. The interesting and practical nature of the work, as well as the opportunity to be creative and see tangible results are significant attraction factors.

However, external perceptions, particularly among young people and those outside the sector, are influenced by negative stereotypes, affecting the overall attractiveness of the industry.

Construction was ranked as the joint third industry that young people would most like to work in. 23% said they would consider working in construction, but 21% said they would never consider it.

It was ranked sixth by parents, and highly by career guidance professionals but was the least popular sector among potential entrants working in other sectors.

Despite positive experiences among construction workers and ranking relatively highly for most groups, the sector faces challenges in turning that initial interest into action and attracting and retaining a sufficient workforce.



Perceptions about entry and access to the sector

Construction workers highlight the appeal of easy entry and local job availability as significant factors influencing their decision to join the industry.

Knowledge of and attraction to construction remain strongly linked. The more people know about the industry the more attractive they tend to find it, and vice versa.

However, external perceptions suggest that challenges in overcoming stereotypes about construction as physically demanding, outdoorsy and masculine remain.

Efforts have been made to improve the image of the sector and address misconceptions, particularly among potential entrants from other industries. However, for many potential applicants the improved image doesn't match an unimproved reality. Go Construct, aims to address these misconceptions by providing resources for people looking for a career in construction. The website showcases the many rewarding careers in construction. [Careers Adviser Videos: Construction Career Videos | Go Construct.](#)

Engagement with construction careers information, advice and guidance

While career guidance relating to construction was seen as good quality, there is a recognised need for more support to establish personal connections within the industry.

Two thirds of new entrants to construction had a family member or friend with construction experience. Personal connections to the industry remain a valuable source of information regarding the benefits of working in construction and a gateway to gaining opportunities to experience the industry first-hand.

New entrants find various elements of careers advice accessible. However, there is room for improvement, especially in enhancing real contacts, connections, and experiences with the construction sector.

[Digger Girl teams up with CITB to help spread the word on construction careers](#)



[From NCC apprentice to social media superstar](#)



The influence of CITB activities

Over a third of young people and parents interviewed have been exposed to CITB advertisements, indicating a good level of awareness. However, the research suggests that more can be done to leverage CITB activities for greater influence, especially in addressing industry image problems and encouraging or facilitating experiential opportunities and fostering personal connections.

Increased awareness needs to be followed up with tangible opportunities. The research also suggests that messaging needs to be consistently reinforced repeatedly, not just to remind audiences what the opportunities are, but how they can access training and find fulfilling and rewarding jobs in construction. It is not enough to make the point well, it needs to be repeated often and in various ways.

CITB have teamed up with Amy Underwood who goes by 'Digger Girl' on social media. Amy started her career at CITB's National Construction College and is a strong and relatable advocate for young people who promotes construction opportunities for all through her platforms on TikTok.

Careers guidance within educational settings is an important way for CITB to reach young people. Careers guidance professionals felt they understood construction, with those who have worked with CITB feeling more knowledgeable.

An integrated approach is needed to enhance the effectiveness of CITB initiatives in shaping attitudes, perceptions, and engagement with the construction industry.

The wider context

Evidence suggests that life preferences, including those that influence career decisions, are made at a very early age. By engaging with young people, post-16, we are already too late.

CITB's 2022 [Rethinking Recruitment](#) research report noted that 30% of people outside the industry felt construction is 'for someone like me.' Just 17% felt construction 'is attractive to me.'

Since then, attractiveness has fallen slightly to 15%. It fell for young people, parents, and career guidance professionals.


The difference in perceptions between industry insiders and outsiders remained consistent across the two research pieces. Insiders view construction as diverse, flexible, and aligned with their values. Outsiders often disagree.

This is why CITB is building an evidence base to inform our long-term strategy, aiming to influence decision makers to ensure construction is on the agenda and fairly represented at early years career-related learning.

Our future careers research will consider how to let children find out about careers in construction at a much younger age, showing the range of possibilities and keeping these open for as long as possible.

This can also help phase out the gender stereotyping of careers and occupations. By secondary school, opinions have already been formed about construction and it can be too late to change minds.

Building on Rethinking Recruitment and this Careers in Construction research, this next piece will make sure that CITB's careers activities inspire more new entrants to join construction, while continuing to support employers to recruit for vacancies to meet the skills shortage.



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The role of CITB

CITB is working with industry to attract, recruit and retain the workforce.

Careers information, advice and guidance

Young people and parents felt that careers information, advice and guidance was of good quality. Additionally, new entrants found that careers advice was easy to access.

This includes the majority of respondents reporting they can easily access good quality careers information, find out what it is like to work in construction, discover opportunities for development and progression, and find job opportunities.

CITB delivers construction careers information through [Go Construct](#). This careers website informs people how to join, train and progress in construction, it also shares personal insights into what the industry offers. We are improving Go Construct with deeper links to [Talentview Construction](#), which allows people to find local work experience, apprenticeships, and job opportunities.

Onsite experiences

Marketing and informing can only go so far, and while personal stories and insights are compelling it is better to give individuals opportunities to try it for themselves.

Construction tasters, including site tours and work experience, and Onsite Experience hubs, which provide practical, onsite construction experience, fill this gap.

CITB supports employers with the delivery of tasters, sharing positive results and advice on running them. We operate a network of twelve Onsite Experience hubs, attracting people from new and wider talent pools that may not normally consider construction. We will continue to champion these initiatives.


Ambassadors

A significant minority felt that people like them do not work in construction. Perceptions and attraction towards the industry improve when they see that they do.

[Go Construct STEM Ambassadors](#) are visible, vocal role models who promote construction face-to-face with young people. Representing people from diverse backgrounds and communities, the ambassador programme taps into a deep pool of industry champions.

A perceived lack of diversity and inclusivity can act as a significant deterrent for underrepresented groups. Ambassadors seek to alleviate this by acting as the face of construction.





To attract career changers, employers should offer multiple pathways and recruitment methods to ensure continued ease of entry into the sector.

What employers can do

Improve understanding, and experience of construction

Those outside of construction continue to have a narrow view of it. This includes how to enter the sector and what it is like to work in it.

Employers should increase awareness by offering work experience, site visits and talks. This creates a real insight into working in construction and allows people to build contacts.

Local career services, such as job centres, charities, and careers providers both within and outside of education can act as a link between employers and new recruits. By engaging with them further and leaning on their expertise, employers can play an active role in making construction careers more accessible.

Employers should also improve accessibility for those without industry connections. This can include placing job adverts outside of construction sites or attending careers fairs and events.

Broaden the attraction of construction careers

Perceptions of working in construction differ greatly between those inside and outside of it.

Employers can make their firms more attractive to young people, parents, and people with disabilities by offering more flexible working opportunities.

This can involve changing work patterns with job sharing, part-time or compressed hours, flexitime or staggered hours, changes to start and finish times, and having predictable working patterns.

To attract career changers, employers should offer multiple pathways and recruitment methods to ensure continued ease of entry into the sector.

To widen the industry's appeal to new groups of workers and dispel stereotypes, employers can demonstrate the variety of roles and career paths available using examples and personal stories. This can promote specific roles alongside generic industry information.

Improve the workplace culture

The perceived macho culture, lack of inclusion and bad behaviour can deter potential entry, especially for under-represented groups (women, people from ethnic minority backgrounds and older individuals).

To tackle this, employers should provide processes for anonymous reporting of poor behaviour and attitudes. All reports should be followed up with investigation and action.

Behaviours expected of workers should be communicated and set out in clear policies. Onsite training and toolbox talks can be used to remind people of expected behaviour. Where improvements have been made, they should be highlighted to improve confidence in the workplace.

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Opportunities for the industry

Build better careers links

Improved understanding of the industry is linked with more positive perceptions which, creates a greater likelihood of people considering a construction career.

The industry should build on this by strengthening links between employers, teachers, career guidance professionals and organisations such as CITB. Those outside construction should be helped to develop real contacts and experiences with the sector.

Industry initiatives, such as [Occupational Traineeships](#) and [Skills Bootcamps](#), provide a useful bridge between education and work, and help prospective employees to cement meaningful connections in the industry.

Target messages at the right groups

Industry can demonstrate how careers in construction can align with people's values by promoting the variety of roles, good pay, interesting work, and opportunities to make a difference that the industry offers.

Target younger people (14 and under) before they have narrowed down their career options. They are generally more open to construction careers than other groups and this should be tapped in to.

Where flexible working practices are available, such as remote working and flexible hours, they should be highlighted and communicated. This would particularly help attract those with caring responsibilities and career changers.

To attract workers from underrepresented groups, existing workers can be encouraged to act as role models and ambassadors.

Share positive working practices

The industry should work with trainers and educators to embed desired cultures and behaviours in training programmes, and support employers to deliver these.

Share actions taken and improvements made across the sector to raise understanding that the sector is working to ensure it is a place for all. Leverage social media and career guidance professionals to share these messages about positive change.

To reach other groups, identify and publicise examples of good practice and highlight key champions from the sector to tackle negative behaviours and promote inclusivity.



Methodology

The research was carried out for CITB by the Institute for Employment Studies and BMG Research. It included:

Stage 1:

Insights from adults in, or close to, the labour market, including those who work in construction (insiders) and potential entrants to the sector (outsiders).

Stage 2:

Feedback from young people (aged 14 to 18), parents of young people and career guidance professionals.

Across the two stages of the research 3,518 people were consulted through online surveys and 40 in-depth interviews conducted with construction workers.

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