

CITB SNAPSHOT REPORT

CHANGING PERCEPTIONS:

The growing appeal of a career
in construction



Research summary

A CITB snapshot report to understand
perceptions of careers in construction
November 2017



A snapshot: Construction and Careers Information, Advice and Guidance

CITB's far reaching survey, part of a longitudinal piece of research of **1,000 young people**, **500 parents**, and more than **800 careers guidance professionals**, gives vital insight to understand perceptions of a career in construction by these key groups.

Recruiting talented people into a career in construction is one of the biggest challenges that our sector faces. Increasing skills demands driven by major infrastructure projects, growing interest in offsite construction and the digitalisation of construction is driving a new generation of future skills. To meet demand, our future workforce must get the right information to help it choose a career in construction.

It is therefore encouraging to see how the industry has come together to offer work experience and site visits through initiatives such as Go Construct, Open Doors and the recent Inspiring Construction programme – all supported by CITB. While it is still very early days, this year's results demonstrate what can be achieved by industry working together.

However, the results also show that there is a long way to go in improving perceptions of construction. There is a lot of work needed, for example, to showcase new and growing opportunities and to provide the chance to take part in work experience. These are areas CITB will be working on with its industry partners in the coming year.

CITB's latest study shows there have been some positive changes in how young people view a potential career in construction. However, there are still significant challenges to overcome. In particular, there is still a lack of knowledge and understanding of construction careers among guidance professionals and a bias towards encouraging less qualified individuals towards the sector. This report summarises the findings to provide insight into the current picture for construction careers.



Results: A healthier picture on attractiveness of construction

Overall, the 2017 survey shows a much healthier picture when it comes to the attractiveness of construction to young people than the 2014 report¹, and even up on last year's equivalent statistics.

Attractiveness of construction to young people

- The overall attractiveness score of the construction industry to young people across all groups was up by an average of 1.1 points year on year to 5.3 points (out of 10), representing an increase of more than 26%.
- In Wales, the increase was particularly notable, with a 2.2 increase from an average rating of 3.7 points in 2016 to 5.8.
- There was also a marked rise in the proportion of young people who rated construction between 8 and 10 when it came to attractiveness. This year, more than a quarter (28%) rated the industry in that top band, compared to 13% in 2016 and just 3% in 2015.

Attractiveness of construction to parents and guidance professionals

This year there was also an increase from these two groups rating the sector highly attractive.

- 30% of parents scored the sector's attractiveness between 8 and 10 (24% in 2016).

- 57% of guidance professionals scored the sector's attractiveness between 8 and 10 (50% in 2016).

Understanding the construction industry

Young people's knowledge of the construction industry, also scored out of ten, rose by 0.9 points overall from 4.6 to 5.5. In 2015, the average score was as low as 3.2, suggesting that, as with the attractiveness rating, the outlook for the sector has improved dramatically. Young people in Wales also demonstrated significantly greater levels of knowledge: 5.9 compared to 4.6 in 2016. There also appears to be more awareness of the breadth of construction roles among young people in 2017 compared to a year previously.

As in previous years, the correlation between how attractive young people viewed a career in construction and their knowledge of the industry was strong. Those giving an attractiveness rating of 7 or above also claimed to have significantly higher levels of knowledge.

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¹Educating the Educators, CITB, Research Report, Feb 2014

Do young people actively consider a construction career?

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- Both construction and civil engineering were placed in the top 10 (seventh and eighth respectively) from a list of 29 potential career paths which young people were asked to consider. (In 2016, construction was 15th).
- Some 59% of those asked said they would consider a career in

construction (35% in 2016) with 47% saying they would consider a career in civil engineering (34% in 2016).

- Among male respondents, two thirds (67%) said they would consider a construction career (60% in 2016), but only 34% of females said this (20% in 2016), suggesting there is still some way to go to demonstrate the attractiveness of the sector to young women.

Building knowledge and confidence amongst careers professionals



- Just one in three careers guidance professionals (32%) believed they had a 'good' knowledge of the industry, with 13% admitting to not having a good knowledge, and the remaining 54% describing their knowledge as 'limited'. Furthermore, nearly a quarter (24%) of careers advisers said they do not feel confident offering advice on the construction industry. Knowledge is significantly lower in secondary schools, where only one in five respondents said they had a 'good' knowledge of the industry.

Careers guidance professionals also revealed that they are still

not confident in providing advice on the construction industry. Only 45% of advisers declared themselves confident in providing careers advice on construction, and although this is an improvement on 2016, when only 26% said they were confident, it is nevertheless a figure to monitor. The increase in confidence may reflect the growing use of resources from industry-designed sites such as Go Construct.

Good quality careers guidance, across all sectors, is seen as crucial by government and industry alike, and this is endorsed by careers advisers with almost three quarters (72%) agreeing that schools should

publish destination data for their pupils. Seven in 10 also believe that the destination and success of pupils is a measure of excellence for the delivery of careers advice.

With widely available resources, this offers an opportunity for CITB and the construction sector to highlight the wealth of initiatives available on construction careers advice to those who are advising the next generation.

‘Exciting, satisfying and well paid’: perceptions of a career in construction

This year’s survey revealed a number of positive changes in the perception of construction as a potential career path for young people.

- 41% of young people are more likely to see a career in construction as well paid (28% in 2016).
- 33% of respondents agree that the sector offers as many jobs for women as men (Up 12% from 21% in 2016).
- More young people (44%) now believe that construction careers are both ‘exciting and full of variety’ (30% in 2016), with 42% percent believing it was ‘satisfying and enjoyable’ (30% in 2016).

This change in perception may in some part be due to the exposure of young people to advertising and marketing campaigns around the construction sector, with 71% of people seeing advertising related to the construction sector, an increase of 11% from 2016.

There has also been extensive coverage of high-profile projects and an increasing awareness of

the use of technology such as Building Information Modelling (BIM) in construction as well as training simulators and games such as CIOB’s Craft your Future, which is aimed at 12-14 year olds and takes place in Minecraft. These have all increased the appeal of an industry that has often struggled to shake off negative stereotypes.

Nevertheless, some old perceptions have remained hard to shift. Young people still see the industry as being low qualified, mundane and unglamorous, and focused on dirty, outdoor work, suitable only for those who are physically strong. Safety concerns also still featured highly for many young people surveyed (46% of young people saw this as a concern in 2017).

So there is still work to be done to counterbalance some of the outdated misconceptions of the industry. This can be helped by parents, who the survey finds tend to have more positive associations with the sector, generally describing it as ‘satisfying and enjoyable’, ‘professional’ and able to offer a wide range of careers.



Vocational routes – a ‘proper’ career?



When it comes to careers advice young people receive in schools, there still seems to be a bias against apprenticeships, which is one of the best routes into a construction career.

- More young people were told by guidance professionals in school that a degree would be more beneficial in the long term (41%) than were told the opposite (31%). Among 18-year-olds, more than half (51%) were advised that a degree offered better prospects.

In a similar finding, pupils with higher level of academic achievement were found to be less likely to receive advice about construction careers from schools or other institutions.

Engaging the construction industry: a focus on careers

Careers guidance professionals would welcome increased engagement with the sector to help them develop their knowledge.

The survey found that young people with family members or friends working in construction were significantly more likely to have a better knowledge of, and look more favourably on, the industry. This may not be a surprise but it suggests that direct engagement with the industry is the best way to improve knowledge and attract a new, skilled workforce.

Careers guidance professionals themselves would also welcome increased engagement with the sector to help them develop their knowledge.

- Nearly two thirds (63%) said they would benefit from working more closely with employers, while 58% said they would welcome a closer relationship with the CITB.
- The numbers suggest that a better relationship is being developed, with 45% of guidance

professionals saying they had worked with CITB, compared to 36% in 2016.

- The number of guidance professionals working with local employers was also up for the fourth straight year, rising to 53%. These improving relationships and engagement may be contributing to improved perceptions of the industry.

For their part, employers could benefit from a closer working relationship with schools to develop young people's interest in construction from as early an age as possible.

Employers tend to get involved with schools and colleges by hosting work experience programmes, inviting pupils on site visits, delivering career talks and hosting taster days, but time constraints have proved a challenge for both employers and careers guidance professionals.







Our survey found that more parents (20%) had experience of being on a construction site than young people (12%), which suggests a good base for initiatives such as Open Doors, which invites people to visit live construction sites in their local area.

Suggestions as to how employers could better engage with schools and pupils included starting to talk to young people as early as at Year 7 and having more female employees come to speak in schools. This would 'help to dispel

the myths that it is only young men who work in this industry,' commented one respondent.

Finally, given the success projects such as Go Construct² – and their promotion on social media channels - have had in raising awareness of the construction industry as a whole, more could be done to promote schemes designed to give young people direct experience, such as Open Doors and Experience Construction.

Conclusions

-  **Perceptions are shifting:** The perception of the construction industry has shifted over the last 12 months for both parents and young people; however negative perceptions continue and need to be challenged.
-  **An appetite for knowledge:** Careers guidance professionals are keen to develop their own knowledge of our industry which offers an opportunity for renewed partnership working between industry, CITB and careers advisers in schools.
-  **The changing face of construction:** lack of knowledge of the breadth of construction careers increases the risk that careers advisers suggest construction careers to pupils with fewer or lower qualifications, directing higher-performing pupils to more highly regarded professions. This has reinforced existing perceptions held by young people and parents regarding the industry being for the low qualified.
-  **Poor perceptions of vocational routes:** Young people are still being discouraged from vocational routes, which offer clear pathways into construction, implicitly deselecting students who could thrive in a construction career. The development and stature of the T-levels offers an opportunity for advisers, parents and young people to think differently about this.
-  **Importance of employer engagement:** In line with the Gatsby benchmarks³ careers advisers are keen to deepen their employer engagement. By engaging earlier and working harder to encourage female pupils to consider construction careers, the industry's Construction Ambassadors, supported by CITB can play a key role in promoting construction careers. This is alongside other nationwide initiatives such as Open Doors and Inspiring Construction.
-  **Guidance from government:** **UK Government:** The Careers Strategy should be published to outline how Technical and Professional Education will finally be placed on an equal footing with academic routes, opening up construction as an exciting career for talented and work-ready people of all ages.
Welsh Government: The proposed Tertiary Education & Research Commission for Wales should include coordination and provision of impartial careers advice for all post-compulsory learners. This creates an opportunity to improve consistency in careers advice across Wales for all routes.

²Go Construct has had over 158,000 18-24 year olds visit the site since launch in September 2015 and last year, CITB supported more than 2,100 visits to schools to promote careers in construction

³Good Career Guidance, The Gatsby Charitable Foundation, 2014

Methodology/Sample

CITB's 2017 Careers Information Advice and Guidance survey was based on interviews with **1,000 young people, 500 parents** and **839 guidance professionals**.

This year's gender split was more even than in previous surveys, with 53% of young person responders being female and 47% male. The age profile was also more evenly spread, with 57% aged between 14 and 16 and the remaining 43% aged 17 or 18. We factored in the implication of this sample change by re-weighting the data so that the results reflected previous year's gender makeup.

Seventy-one per cent of those surveyed were still at school, with 16% at a further education college and a further 5% at university. One in ten were working, either full or part time.

Secondary school provided the largest number of guidance professionals surveyed (28%). Another 22% worked in further education or higher education, while 12% provided advice at job centres.

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