Workforce mobility and skills in the UK construction sector 2025

Research report

March 2026

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Executive summary

Introduction

CITB commissioned BMG Research to undertake the 2025 Construction Workforce Mobility Survey, which builds on previous surveys conducted in 2022, 2018/2019, 2015, 2012, 2007, and 2005. Face-to-face interviews and a small number of paper surveys were conducted with 3,611 construction workers undertaking manual roles on sites across the UK.

Profile of the sample

Nearly all (96%) construction workers in the sample are male. Close to half (44%) of construction workers interviewed in the survey are aged 34 and under, which is a higher proportion compared with the UK population as a whole (34%). Just 6% of construction workers are aged 60 or over.

Overall, 11% of the workforce represent an ethnic minority group, compared with a higher incidence of 16% in the UK 16 to 64 population as a whole. By region/nation, the South East has the highest proportion of workers from an ethnic minority group (23%), and for the first time over the time the survey has been undertaken a higher proportion than in London (21%), and higher than the incidence of 14% in the region.

A quarter (24%) of construction workers originate from another country, increasing to 54% in London, 46% in the South East and 29% in the East of England.

Close to four in five (77%) construction workers hold a UK passport, around one in seven (15%) hold a passport for another country, 3% report not having a passport, with the remaining 5% preferring not to say.

Three quarters (76%) of construction workers have lived in the UK all their lives, and a further one in five (18%) have lived in the UK for more than 5 years.

Labourers/general operatives account for the largest proportion of the sample (29%), followed by site managers (13%) and bricklayers, carpenters/joiners, plant/machine operatives and those in technical trades (all 7%).

More than a quarter (28%) of those interviewed perform a supervisory or management role on their site (compared to 28% in 2022, 30% in 2018/19, 25% in 2015 and 17% in 2012).

Close to three in five (59%) construction workers interviewed for the survey are employed directly by a company, which is a significantly higher proportion than 2022 (48%), and the highest level since 2012. The proportion of self-employed workers has declined (33%, compared to 42% in 2022), and fewer than one in ten (7%) work for an agency (compared to 9% in 2022). Workers from an ethnic minority group are significantly more likely than workers of a white ethnic origin to work for an employment agency (19% compared to 6%). By region/nation the proportion of workers employed directly varies from 97% in the North East, down to just 35% in the South East.

Close to three in ten (29%) construction workers interviewed are employed on a temporary, rather than permanent basis. By region/nation the proportion of construction workers working on a temporary basis is higher than average in the West Midlands (52%), the South East (45%), the East of England)37%), Northern Ireland (36%) and Yorkshire and the Humber (34%).

Close to two thirds (64%) work between 40 and 49 hours per week, while nearly one in five work more than 50 hours per week (17%), rising to 26% in the South East and Yorkshire and the Humber.

Work history

Time in the sector

More than a quarter (28%) of all construction workers have worked in the industry for at least 20 years and over half have done so for 10+ years (52%).

Three quarters (78%) of construction workers have worked solely within the construction industry, including 65% who have done so pretty much continuously, without spells out of work.

Previous non-construction jobs

Overall, 15% of construction workers worked in another sector before starting work in construction, and among this group the sectors worked in beforehand are most likely to be wholesale and retail (18%), accommodation (15%), manufacturing (14%) and transportation and storage (13%).

In terms of the job roles that construction workers previously held in other sectors, the highest proportion were in skilled trade occupations (20%) and elementary administration and service occupations (27%).

Occupational switching within the construction sector

Overall, 26% of all construction workers have worked in more than one construction trade or occupation whilst working in the construction industry, a significant decline on the 35% who had done so in 2022.

Construction workers that have worked in at least one other role/occupation are most likely to have previously worked as a labourer/general operative (35%), while 15% had previously worked as a carpenter/joiner and 9% as a bricklayer.

Overall, seven in ten (70%) feel they definitely will, or that it is very likely that they will, still want to work in construction in 5 years' time. Three quarters (77%) would like to carry on in the same trade or occupation, while 6% would like to change their trade or occupation and 4% would like to leave the industry.

In previous iterations of the survey, amongst those who would like to change trade or occupation, the highest proportion said they would like to be a site manager (25% in 2022). However, in 2025, this has reduced to 7%, and the most frequently mentioned trade/occupation is now bricklayer (17%), followed by carpenter/joiner (15%), with other trades/occupations mentioned by fewer than one in ten.

As was the case in 2022, two in three (68%) of construction workers who would like to change trade or occupation believe they will require further training or qualifications to do this other kind of work, a lower proportion than was the case in 2018/19 (87%) and in 2015 (77%).

The most frequently cited reason for wanting to change trade or occupation is the expectation that they would be better paid (60%), followed by wanting to use their skills/abilities better (42%). A quarter (25%) want more responsibility and one in five (21%) believe it will be less physical.

Qualifications and skills

Skills cards/certificates

The vast majority (93%) of all construction workers report holding a skill card or certificate (e.g. CSCS or CSR), in line with 2022 (93%), but remaining down on the 97% who did so in 2018/19 and in earlier surveys.

Almost all workers in the South East (97%), the West Midlands (96%) and the North West (95%) report having a card, while this proportion falls to 89% in the North East, South West and in Scotland.

Younger workers and those who have worked in construction for less than a year (81% in both cases) are less likely to hold a skill card/certificate, but there is little difference between workers across older age groups and with differing lengths of experience (of over a year) in the propensity to hold a skill card or certificate.

In terms of the type of skill card/certificate held, CSCS remains the most commonly held overall (84%), and in Northern Ireland most (92%) hold the CSR card/certificate.

Construction-specific qualifications

Overall, three quarters (75%) of all construction workers surveyed reported that they had no formal qualifications when they first started working in the construction industry, which is in line with levels seen in 2018/19 (72%) and 2015 (75%).

The proportion saying they did have formal qualifications when they first started working in the construction industry remains higher amongst younger workers (27% of those aged under 25, compared to 20% of those aged 25+).

By current trade/occupation the proportion of workers who started their construction careers with no formal qualifications is highest amongst roofers (87%), plasterers (86%), plant/machine operatives (85%), scaffolders (84%), labourers/general operatives (83%) and those in other trades (88%).

By contrast, those in technical trades (34%), site managers (32%), electricians (31%) and carpenters/joiners (29%) are more likely than average to report they did have formal qualifications when they first started in the industry.

Overall, 52% of all construction workers hold some sort of construction-related qualification, and this increases from 38% of those aged 16 to 19 to 61% of those aged 45 or over. Self-employed workers are more likely than average to hold a qualification (60%).

The proportion of workers who hold construction-related qualifications is higher than average among site managers (81%), technical trades (73%), plumbers (72%), electricians (70%), bricklayers (63%), carpenters/joiners (61%) and plant/machine operatives (58%).

As in previous years, the qualifications most likely to be held by construction workers are NVQ/SVQ qualifications (38% of all workers).

One in ten (8%) construction workers hold City & Guilds qualifications, whilst one in twenty (5%) now hold an apprenticeship or a degree.

Basic skills needs

Overall, one in five (20%) workers believe they would benefit from some form of training in basic skills, in line with 2022 (19%). The specific skills needs are also very much in line with 2022, which saw increases over 2018/19, with one in ten (10%) believing they would benefit from training in reading, and a similar proportion in speaking English (9%), writing (8%) and maths (8%). Just 2% mention a need for training in digital skills.

Those aged under 25 are the most likely to report a need for training in basic skills – 32% of those aged 16 to 19 and 28% of those aged 20 to 24. Both these younger age groups are most likely to mention a need for training in maths (18% and 14% respectively), but at least one in ten of both groups identify a need for training in each of the other skills, with the exception of digital skills.

Current study for qualifications

Overall, one in ten (9%) of construction workers are currently working towards formal qualifications relevant to the construction industry, which is the lowest level reported since 2012 (13% in 2022, 15% in 2018/19, 12% in 2015 and 11% in 2012).

As in previous surveys, the likelihood that workers are currently working towards qualifications is significantly higher than average amongst the youngest workers (43% of 16 to 19 year olds and 18% of 20 to 24 year olds). However, it is among those aged 20 to 44 that the greatest declines have been seen: 18% of 20 to 24 year olds are currently working towards qualifications as compared to 24% in 2022, and 7% of 25 to 44 year olds are doing so, as compared to 11% in 2022.

Variations are also evident by current job role, with electricians (21%), bricklayers (17%) and site managers (12%) more likely than average and labourers/general operatives (3%) less likely than average to be currently working towards qualifications.

Supervisory/managerial training

Amongst those who do not currently perform supervisory/management roles and have not had this role before, 15% want to become a supervisor or manager in the future, continuing the decline since 2018/19, where 24% wanted to. A further 5% have had a supervisory/managerial role previously and want to return to that status.

One in eight (12%) of all construction workers not currently managers/supervisors are unsure as to whether they would like to be one in the future, a decline on the 18% who were unsure in 2022.

Over two in three (68%) do not want to be a manager or supervisor, a significant uplift on the 59% who felt this way in 2022, and continuing an upward trend on this measure. For the first time this year, this measure was split by whether workers had or had not previously performed supervisory/management roles. On this basis, 56% had not done so before, and 12% had done so.

Three in ten of all respondents (31% compared to 33% in 2022, 34% in 2018/19 and 25% in 2015) and four in five of those who have or have had some form of supervisory or management responsibilities (83% compared to 80% in 2022, 81% in 2018/19, 73% in 2015 and 71% in 2012) have received formal training designed to improve managerial or supervisory knowledge or skills.

In terms of the types of supervisory/managerial training undertaken, SMSTS (Site Manager Safety Training Scheme) continues to be the most frequently mentioned by those who have undertaken any training (63%), and to a greater extent than was the case in 2022 (43%). Site Safety Supervisors Courses (32%) and in-house training (25%) are the next most common types of training, in line with 2022 (31% and 24% respectively), and with previous iterations of the survey.

Overall skill levels

The vast majority of construction workers (96%) have a construction-related qualification and/or skills card/certificate (or were working towards a qualification at the point of interview): only 3% of those interviewed could not say that they were at least working towards obtaining a CSCS card (or similar) or construction qualification.

A third of the workforce (36%) holds a skill card/certificate but have no other construction qualification. One in ten (9%) are working towards a qualification.

Overall, close to half (46%) have qualifications equivalent to Level 2 or above.

Geographic mobility

Work history in the region/nation

As has been the case since 2018/19, around half (51%) report that their employer sent them here. There has been a marked reduction in the proportion who say they grew up in this location/have always lived there, from 46% in 2022 to 22% in the latest survey, and this is largely as a result of an increase in the proportion saying it is for family reasons, from 5% in 2022 to 19% in the latest survey. There have also been increases, although much less marked, in the proportions saying there are more jobs available in the area (from 3% to 7%), and in mentions of better pay (from 4% to 6%).

Having grown up there is mentioned at higher levels than average by workers in Northern Ireland (67%), the South West (46%), Wales (45%), Yorkshire and the Humber (37%) and Scotland (32%). Being sent there by their employer is mentioned at higher levels than average by workers in the North East (100%), the East Midlands (82%), London (70%) and the East of England (64%).

While the proportion of workers who have worked within their current region for their entire career has reduced, from 49% in 2022 to 41% in the latest survey, there has been a corresponding increase in the proportion who report working in their current region most of the time, from 34% in 2022 to 41% in the latest survey. This means that the proportion of workers who have worked in their current region for all or most of their career has remained stable at 81% (compared to 83% in 2022), following an increase over 2018/19 (77%). Those based in Northern Ireland (78%), Scotland (58%), Wales (54%), the South West (53%) and the West Midlands (51%) are more likely than average to say they have spent all their career in this current region/nation.

Region/nation worked in before current site

Thinking about the last construction site they worked on before their current one, in the majority of cases, workers' last sites are in the same region/nation as they are working in now. However, the extent to which this is the case varies considerably by region/nation.

Workers in the North East (98%), Scotland (95%), London (88%) and Northern Ireland (88%) are more likely than those in other regions to report their last site was in the same nation/region as they are working in now. Those in the South East are less likely to report this is the case (64%), with 24% previously having worked in London, as are those in the East Midlands (65%), where 21% had previously worked in the West Midlands, and those in Yorkshire and the Humber (68%), where 9% had previously worked in the North West and 8% had previously worked in the East Midlands.

Worker origins

Overall, three quarters of all construction workers were interviewed in the same region/nation in which they were living when they started their construction career (75% compared to 74% in 2022, 72% in 2018/19 and 75% in 2015). There are, however, considerable variations in the extent to which workers have remained in their original locality.

As was the case in 2022, nine in ten or more workers currently based in the North East (98%), Scotland (94%) and Northern Ireland (95%) have remained in the same region/nation in which they were based when they started their construction careers. This is also true for close to nine in ten of those in the North West (87%).

The proportion for whom this is the case is lowest in the South East (50%), where 42% first started working in another region/nation, including 28% who started in London, Yorkshire and the Humber (65%), where 31% first started working in another region/nation, and the East Midlands (66%), where 30% first started working in another region/nation, including 22% who started in the West Midlands.

Travel to site

Location of current workplace relative to home location

The majority of construction workers who provided sufficient information to identify the location of their current home were interviewed on a site that was located within the same region/nation as their permanent home, but there is some variation as to whether this was the case by region/nation.

All workers in Northern Ireland and almost all workers in Scotland (99%) and the North East (97%) were interviewed on a site that was located within the same region/nation as their permanent home.

By contrast, the following regions are more likely to import workers from other regions, most commonly neighbouring regions:

- East Midlands (44% overall, including 39% from neighbouring regions)
- East Of England (42% overall, including 37% from neighbouring regions)
- South East (40% overall, including 28% from neighbouring regions)
- London (29% overall, including 24% from neighbouring regions)

South East is the only region that is a significant importer of labour from other regions further afield – 11% come from a region that is further afield.

Furthest distance travelled

A third (34%) of all construction workers have worked no more than 20 miles from their permanent home, in line with 2022 (33%), but a higher proportion than was the case prior to 2022 (26% in 2018/19 and 20% in 2015).

A further third (35%) have worked between 21 and 50 miles away from home, in line with previous years (33% in 2022, 32% in 2018/19 and 31% in 2015).

This leaves more than a quarter (28%) who have worked more than 50 miles away from their permanent or current home, lower than the 32% in 2022, 41% in 2018/19 and 47% in 2015. This includes one in six (18%) that have worked between 50 and 100 miles (compared to 20% in 2022, 24% in 2018/19 and 26% in 2015), and one in ten (10%) that have worked more than 100 miles from home (compared to 12% in 2022, 17% in 2018/19 and 21% in 2015).

Once again there are variations in this regard, with workers based in Yorkshire and Humber (17%), the West Midlands (16%), Northern Ireland and Wales (both 15%) most likely to have travelled more than 100 miles from their permanent home to work in the last 12 months.

Journey distance to work

The average (mean) distance from workers’ current residence (taking into account temporary residences) to their current site is 20 miles, somewhat reversing the downward trend that has been seen since the survey began (16 miles in 2022, 18 miles in 2018/19, 22 miles in 2015 and 28 miles in 2012).

Use of temporary accommodation

Nationally, one in twenty (5%) construction workers reported that they were currently staying in temporary accommodation while working at their site, in line with previous years (5% in 2018/19, and 6% in 2015 and 2012). The proportion is highest amongst workers currently based in London (10%) and lowest in the Northern Ireland (1%). Construction workers from ethnic minority groups are more likely than White workers to be living in temporary accommodation (12% compared to 4%).

Site duration and change

In a quarter (25%) of cases temporary workers do not know how much longer they could expect to be working for their current company, continuing a decline on this measure since 2018/19 (38%, and 32% in 2022).

When all workers, whether temporary or permanent, were asked to indicate how long in total they expect to work at that specific site during this phase, one in five (20%) did not expect to work on that site for more than a month, which is the highest level recorded since 2012 (12% in 2022, 14% in 2018/19 and 12% in 2015 and 2012). Over half (56%) of all workers anticipated being on site for more than a month but less than a year, continuing an upward trend on this measure (53% in 2022 and 51% in 2018/19). One in ten (11%) of all workers expect to stay on that site for a year or longer, down on the 13% who did so in 2022, the 18% who did so in 2018/19, and the 26% who did so in 2015.

At 13%, the proportion of workers unsure how long they will be working at that site has reduced to its lowest level since 2012 (22% in 2022, 16% in 2018/19, 24% in 2015 and 20% in 2012).

By region/nation, workers in the North East (20%) are most likely to be unsure of how much longer they will be working at that site, while workers in Northern Ireland (7%) and the East of England (9%) are least likely to be unsure.

Two thirds (65%) of all workers believe that when they finish this job, they will get a job that allows them to travel from their permanent home to work daily. While this continues to be a majority, it is lower than the 69% who believed this to be the case in 2022, which was also a decline on 2018/19 (84%).

However, the proportion who are sure that this will not be the case has remained stable (6% compared to 5% in 2022 and 4% in 2018/19), as has the proportion who believe it depends where the work is (23% compared to 20% in 2022, which was a significant uplift on 2018/19 (8%).

Sub-sector and sector mobility

Sub-sector mobility

New housing continues to be the most common type of construction work undertaken at 73%, but to a lesser extent than has been seen previously (78% in 2022 and 79% in 2018/19), followed by housing repair and maintenance (42%, compared to 42% in 2022 and 46% in 2018/19). At 45%, commercial work has recovered to an extent, following a dip in 2022 (39% compared to 51% in 2018/19).

Private industrial work (26%), public non-housing work (26%) and infrastructure building projects (15%) have all declined since 2022 (35%, 32% and 23% respectively) and 2018/19 (45%, 51% and 31% respectively), placing these at their lowest levels yet.

Included for the first time this year, 4% had worked in energy efficiency retrofitting, although this rises to 24% in Northern Ireland.

Reflecting these results, there has been a continued reduction in the proportion of workers who have worked on four or more types of construction, from 39% in 2018/19, to 24% in 2022, to 20% in the latest survey.

The number of project types worked on varies significantly by region/nation. More than half of workers in the East Midlands (53%) and half of those in London and Wales (both 50%) have only worked on one type, compared with 12% in Northern Ireland, and around three in ten in Scotland (27%), the North East (31%) and Yorkshire and Humber (33%).

Leaving the sector

Close to half (47%) believe they will definitely want to be working in construction in 5 years' time, an uplift on the 43% who expressed this sentiment in 2022, returning this to the level seen in 2018/19 (48%). A further 23% say this is very likely, down on the 27% who said this in 2022 and the 26% who did so in 2018/19. Consequently, including those who say it is quite likely, 83% believe this is likely to be the case, in line with 2022 (82%) but remaining somewhat lower than 2018/19 (86%).

In line with previous surveys, around one in twenty construction workers consider it unlikely (6%) that they will still be working in construction in 5 years' time, with just 2% saying they definitely will not be. A further 4% hope to be retired by then, and one in twenty (7%) do not know.

Key Messages

The survey aims to describe the mainly manual workforce that populate construction sites across the UK. What it highlights is an experienced workforce that is predominately male and white in its composition. It is a picture of a stable workforce, dominated by those who joined the industry post-education and have worked in the industry continuously ever since.

The survey suggests that most workers follow traditional and long-standing career pathways, many starting as labourers and in skilled trades before moving into more highly skilled roles. A natural progression is towards managing others as a site manager/supervisor, but the survey findings suggest that (in 2025) more workers are eschewing this path and its accompanying additional responsibilities in favour of earning more in high demand occupations, such as bricklaying. Switching between occupations tends to be driven mainly by the opportunity for better pay and while personal progression – or wanting to make the most of skills or abilities - is still significant, this does not necessarily mean that workers want to take on more responsibility.

There is little evidence that construction is drawing in more workers from other sectors, which is increasingly important for maintaining and growing the workforce. In fact, the survey highlights a fall in workers entering construction after working in other sectors. With fewer workers moving into construction from elsewhere, the industry has less scope to fill skills gaps quickly by drawing on experience gained in other parts of the economy.

There is also little evidence that efforts to increase diversification within the workforce are having an impact. Over the years, we have not seen any significant upward trend in representation of females, workers from ethnic minority groups or those with disabilities within the workforce.

In addition, the 2025 survey suggests declining mobility within the industry, mainly in respect of job roles, but also in geography. Low levels of switching between roles are highlighted, with the majority of workers indicating a preference for staying in the role they are in. Moving to new roles triggers training and progression, while staying as they are stalls skills development and reduces the need to acquire new qualifications/certification. Given that most workers join the industry straight after education with no construction-related qualifications, we continue to see much of the workforce without formal qualifications some way into their careers, and although there are high levels of certification, very few are working towards qualifications as they go. Taken together, this points to a workforce that is becoming more settled in its existing skills profile, with fewer triggers for retraining, progression, or formal up-skilling - when the industry arguably needs the exact opposite.

In terms of lower levels of geographic mobility, there are still come regions, such as London and the South East, which are attracting workers from further afield, but on the whole workers are not travelling as far from home to work as they did before the COVID 19 pandemic, and working where they grew up/have family ties is increasingly important. This might reflect a more home-centred mind set following the pandemic. Lower levels of geographic mobility also make it harder for the industry to respond to regional differences in demand, as shortages of labour and skills are less easily addressed by workers moving from other parts of the country.

There has also been a shift away from self-employment towards direct employment. This feels like a subtle structural change within the industry and may reflect need of employers to cultivate a stable, reliable and controlled workforce to deliver projects and the desire from workers to have greater job security – perhaps in response to increases in the cost of living and house prices, particularly in the last two to three years.

While self-employment, temporary working, short site durations, and long working hours are all less significant than they were, they are still common practices within construction. They are an inevitable part of the project-based nature of the industry which requires the workforce to follow the work and to be willing to adapt their skills to demand. The survey points to some concerns regarding how these requirements will be met in the future. Compared with two to three years ago, workers appear more resistant to changing roles, taking on more responsibility, travelling long distances to work, formally up-skilling, and moving between sub-sectors reducing the flow of experience between projects and limiting the transfer of skills, knowledge and working practices across the industry.

The 2025 survey highlights a steady, stable workforce that is becoming increasingly static at a time when construction output is set to grow and when construction needs to move into new areas and adopt new technologies. The key question is whether the current workforce is building experience and renewing skills at the pace required to meet these challenges and, whether there is the appetite to do so. Overall, the survey findings suggest that it is not.

Introduction

Aims and objectives

In 2025 BMG Research was commissioned to undertake a UK-wide survey of the mobility and skills of UK construction workers. This follows on from previous iterations conducted in 2022, 2018/19, 2015, 2012, 2007 and 2005,

The primary aim of this project is to provide robust and reliable information from site-based workers across the UK construction industry on their qualification levels and the extent of their occupational and geographic mobility. This work enhances the evidence-base for skills planning, particularly in respect of profiling the existing workforce and identifying where skills gaps might emerge as a result of occupational and geographic movement. The findings should assist the industry, government, training providers and others with responsibility for industry skills development in directing their work with greater accuracy and effect.

The specific objectives of this research project are to:

- examine the qualification levels of the construction industry workforce in the UK and analyse what part qualifications have played in career progression
- identify, quantify and analyse the extent to which the workforce in each region/nation within the UK comprises workers originating or living in other parts of the UK (or further afield) and mobility and travel to work
- examine the occupations and qualification levels of the mobile UK-origin workforce and of that part of the workforce with overseas origins
- examine the scale and extent of occupational mobility within the construction workforce to see how workers in construction occupations change their occupations over time, both within construction and in relation to other sectors, and, related to this, the extent to which managers and supervisors have received training specifically to enhance their managerial skills

The focus of the survey is on site-based physical delivery of construction projects and, therefore, excludes associated clerical and sales occupations and professionals such as architects, surveyors and office-based managers.

Method

Overview

The 2025 Construction Workforce Mobility Survey followed a similar methodology to that used in the last wave of this research in 2022. Overall, 3,611 interviews with construction workers in site-based roles across the UK were required, split between the 12 standard regions/nations.

Sampling

This sub-section provides an overview of the sampling methodology employed for the survey. Further detail is provided in the technical report that accompanies this analytical report.

Although this survey focuses on the mobility of individual workers, the sampling strategy has always been to select construction projects (generally referred to in this report as 'sites') with sufficient workers on-site each day to enable a minimum of 10 interviews. This site-based approach has been employed to ensure cost-effective face-to-face interviewing, but it also facilitates analysis of travel patterns. Project eligibility criteria is imposed to ensure both cost-effective face-to-face interviewing and to ensure that the survey is covering a broad range of occupations working on sites.

In previous surveys the commercially produced 'Glenigan' database of construction projects was used as the sampling frame. In 2022, this was supplemented with information from 'Construction Maps'[1], which is available online and provides details of construction sites across the UK. This information could be provided to interviewers so that they were able to visit sites to request access to conduct interviews with workers on site. They were able to target clusters of construction sites in all regions/nations. In 2025, it was decided to roll this sampling approach out for all fieldwork, eliminating the need to use the 'Glenigan' database and having to book visits ahead of time. Fieldwork could be completed in a shorter period and at a lower cost using 'Construction Maps'

Project eligibility criteria were:

- value: £250,000+
- contract stage: 'start on site'; 'contract awarded' or 'bills called' only
- site start date/end date: active throughout planned fieldwork period

Where sites met these criteria, they were deemed eligible to participate, and the vast majority of sites recorded in 'Construction Maps' fit this criteria i.e. they had to be large construction projects to be recorded in this software and they were current at the time of fieldwork.

The average number of sites per region/nation was 36, with the lowest number in the East of England (26) and the highest in Northern Ireland (63). The average number of interviews conducted per site was 8, with the lowest average number of interviews per site in Northern Ireland (5) and the highest in East of England (12).

Across all sites visited, 53% agreed to allow interviewers on site to ask workers to complete the survey. All site visits were undertaken with express permission and under the supervision of the site manager.

[1] Construction Map

The following table shows the number of interviews achieved in each region/nation. In order to obtain strong bases for regional/national analysis, a quota of 300 completed questionnaires per region/nation was set, with an allowance of +/-50 interviews per region/nation. However, at the analysis stage, weighting factors were applied to survey data to ensure that, for national analysis, regions/nations were represented in their correct proportions according to the size of the construction workforce per region/nation as reported in the government's Annual Population Survey of economically active adults aged 16 and over.

Table 1: Number of interviews in the weighted sample by region/nation

	Interviews	Weighted percentage
East Midlands	300	6.6
East of England	300	11.7
London	302	12.2
North East	301	3.5
North West	300	11.1
South East	300	14.0
South West	302	10.7
West Midlands	300	7.6
Yorkshire and the Humber	304	8.4
Northern Ireland	300	2.8
Scotland	300	7.4
Wales	302	4.2
UK	3,611	100.0

*Source Annual Population Survey via Nomis: Economically Active adults aged 16+, Oct 2023-Sep 2024; note that total percentage does not add exactly to 100 because of rounding

Further information on sampling and the sites included can be found in the technical report.

Interviews were completed using Computer Assisted Personal Interviewing (CAPI) techniques as well as self-completion techniques, including sharing a link to an online survey for workers to complete on site or once they were home later. Fieldwork was completed between June and November 2025 inclusive.

Further detail on the interviewing process is provided in the technical report.

Methodological points to note

In discussing findings from this 2025 survey of mobility and skills in the UK's construction industry workforce, a number of preliminary points are relevant.

First, some methodological points apply.

As noted in the report's introduction, sampling variation (for example, random differences in the composition of the samples in different editions of the survey or in the different regional sub-samples within this year's survey) may induce apparent differences or exaggerate actual differences in survey findings over time or between regions which owe more to these sampling effects than to real world change. This effect is particularly likely when considering smaller sub-sets of data where such effects have the potential to have a proportionately greater impact. The point is not that differences in findings for different groups or over time are necessarily unreal but that a degree of care needs to be applied in interpreting the findings such that their consistency with other related data and with extraneous knowledge of the environment in which the survey took place is considered.

Further, on this question of interpretation, it is evident that a broad survey, as here, of large numbers of respondents using a structured questionnaire, produces statements of fact (as far as best survey practice can estimate 'fact') but does not necessarily explain the reason for a particular statistic or its change over time. In the discussion below, thus, some interpretative observations on the data are made which extend beyond the data itself. Manifestly, such observations will have greater or lesser justification and readers with knowledge of the industry will, of course, apply their own knowledge and experience in considering particular findings.

Notes on reading this report

A number of conventions have been employed within this report to assist with the concise presentation of numeric data and with brevity within text.

The base for statistics is described below each table, with the base counts (unweighted) on dedicated rows of tables. Where tables include statistics on many different bases, the unweighted bases for 2025 data are shown in brackets.

All tables present percentages (unless otherwise stated) calculated upon the bases shown. Where 'mean' averages are shown, these are calculated upon the stated base, minus any responses 'not stated' or choosing a 'don't know/not applicable' response.

Tables and graphs are all labelled with a simple sequential table number and title. All tables have clearly labelled base sizes and textual definitions of bases. The total of percentages shown in a table may vary slightly from 100% due to rounding to the nearest percentage point.

Analysis by region/nation should be read with caution because of their limited sub-sample sizes. Unweighted bases are shown throughout for guidance on this point.

Profile of construction site workers

Introduction

This first section of the report provides a profile of construction site workers interviewed in the survey and, where possible, makes comparisons with previous years' surveys. The section examines: *personal demographics*, including gender, age, ethnicity, nationality (including length of time that workers have been resident in the UK) and disability; *current occupation*; *employment status* i.e. whether employed directly, self-employed or by an agency; and *employment contract basis* i.e. whether working on a temporary or permanent basis.

The section then moves on to examine career histories, including: the number of years respondents have worked in the construction industry, pre-construction employment histories, occupational switching, and progression within the construction sector.

Personal demographics

Gender

As in previous years of the survey, the vast majority of construction workers interviewed were male (96%), although 2025 continues an incremental decline in male workers in this respect (97% in 2022, 98% in 2018/19 and 99% in 2015).

Male dominance is greater in the survey sample than in the UK construction workforce as a whole, as this survey does not include those in office-based roles within the construction industry (either administrative or professional, where the incidence of female workers is higher) and interviews were conducted on relatively large construction sites (valued at £250,000+).

Consequently, many female construction workers on small building sites and in maintenance and repair (an industry segment in which women, for example in some small all-female businesses, may be slightly more frequent) are largely excluded.

More detail is shown in the table below.

Table 2: Gender profile of the sample over time and compared with the Annual Population Survey

	2025 %	2022 %	2018/9 %	2015 %	UK workforce* %
Male	96	97	98	99	52
Female	2	2	1	<0.5	48
Transgender	<0.5	<0.5	<0.5	-	-
Non-binary	<0.5	<0.5	<0.5	-	-
Prefer not to say	1	<0.5	<0.5	<0.5	-
Unweighted bases	3,611	3,005	4,048	4,771	34,517,100

Q43. I identify my gender as……
Base: all respondents
*Source Annual Population Survey via Nomis: Economically Active adults aged 16+ July 2024 to June 2025

Age

The youngest age group (16- to 24-year-olds) accounts for 15% of construction workers, those aged 25 to 44 make up over half (53%), while those aged 45 or older account for the remaining 30%. The table below shows more detailed proportions.

Compared to 2022, and to previous iterations of the survey, the proportion of construction workers aged 16 to 24 has reduced significantly from 19% in 2022 to 15% in the latest survey, with a corresponding increase in those aged 25 to 44, from 50% to 53%.

As in previous surveys, compared with the UK workforce overall, a higher proportion of construction workers are aged under 35 years (44% cf. 34% of economically active adults across the UK). This may reflect the fact that construction workers in manual roles, as in this survey, are more likely to seek alternative employment in later years due to the physically arduous nature of some of these roles.

Table 3: Age profile of the sample over time and compared with the Annual Population Survey

	2025 %	2022 %	2018/9 %	2015 %	UK Workforce* %
16 to 19 years	5	6	5	5	3
20 to 24 years	10	13	12	13	8
25 to 34 years	29	26	28	29	23
35 to 44 years	24	24	23	22	22
45 to 54 years	16	17	20	20	22
55 to 59 years	8	8	7	6	10
60+ years	6	6	4	4	11
Unweighted bases	3,611	3,005	4,048	4,771	34,517,100

Q44. Which of the following age brackets do you fall into?
Base: All respondents
*Source Annual Population Survey via Nomis: Economically Active adults aged 16+ July 2024 to June 2025

Ethnicity

In terms of ethnicity, while the vast majority of construction workers continue to be of White origin (87% compared to 91% in 2022), this represents a significant reduction in this respect, placing the figure more in line with the UK working age population (83%).

While still at low levels, significant increases have been seen in terms of those of Black origin (from 2% to 4%) and those of Asian origin (from 2% to 5%) since 2022.

Table 4: Ethnic profile of the sample over time and compared with the UK population

	2025 %	2022 %	2018/9 %	2015 %	UK Population aged 16-64* %
White	87	91	94	94	83
Black	4	2	2	2	5
Asian	5	2	2	1	9
Mixed	1	1	1	-	2
Other/Not stated	3	3	1	3	2
Unweighted bases	3,611	3,005	4,048	4,771	32,989,600

Q49. Which of the following best describes your ethnic group?
Base: all respondents
*Source Annual population Survey via Nomis: UK population aged 16-64 July 2024 to June 2025

Table 5 below summarises the proportion of construction workers of ethnic minority origin overall and within each region/nation, and compares the profile with construction workers from the 2022, 2018/19 and 2015 surveys and with the ethnic minority population (aged 16-64) of each region/nation as a whole.

Overall, 11% of construction workers across the UK sample represent an ethnic minority group, a significant uplift on the 7% who did so in 2022, although this remains lower than the higher incidence of 17% across the UK population.

Significant increases in the proportion of construction workers identifying as non-White in the South East, from 11% in 2022 to 23% in the latest survey, place this region ahead of London for the first time in this respect (21%). This proportion is also higher than the regional prevalence of non-White working age individuals of 14%.

These two regions are closely followed by the West Midlands, which has seen a similarly large increase as the South East, from 7% to 20% in the latest survey.

Table 5: Proportion of construction workers of ethnic minority origin by region/nation over time

Row percentages	2025 %	2022 %	2018/9 %	2015 %	Ethnic minority population aged 16-64* %
UK (3,611)	11	7	6	4	17
East Midlands (300)	10	3	2	2	14
East of England (300)	9	5	5	3	13
London (302)	**21**	19	15	15	42
North East (301)	<0.5	2	<0.5	<0.5	6
North West (300)	3	1	3	1	14
South East (300)	**23**	11	10	8	14
South West (302)	7	3	5	2	6
West Midlands (300)	**20**	7	7	5	25
Yorkshire and the Humber (304)	9	5	5	2	13
Northern Ireland (300)	2	1	1	1	4
Scotland (300)	3	3	1	2	6
Wales (302)	9	3	2	2	6

Q49. Which of the following best describes your ethnic group?
Unweighted bases for 2025 in parentheses: all respondents
*Source Annual population Survey via Nomis: UK Population aged 16-64 by ethnicity July 2024 to June 2025
Note: figures in bold for 2025 are statistically higher than the average at the 95% confidence level

Country of origin

While three quarters (76%) of construction workers originate from the UK in the latest survey, this represents a decline on the 83% who did so in 2022. This figure falls to 46% in London, 54% in the South East, and 71% in the East of England.

As has been the case in previous surveys, the largest proportion of non-UK workers are from Romania (6%), with other countries of origin mentioned by no more than 3% (India).

The proportions from EU and non-EU countries are similar at a UK level, at 10% and 12% respectively, but these rise to around one in five and a quarter in London (21% and 25% respectively) and the South East (21% and 23% respectively).

As was the case in 2022, the prevalence of construction workers from Albania peaks in London (6%), closely followed by the East of England (5%).

Construction workers of Indian origin are more prevalent than average in London, the East of England and the South East (6%, 6% and 7% respectively).

Table 6: Country of origin of non-UK national construction workers in the UK by region/nation

Row percentages	EU %	Non-EU %	Albania %	India %	Romania %
UK (3,611)	10	12	2	3	6
East Midlands (300)	8	9	0	3	6
East of England (300)	**14**	13	**5**	**6**	**12**
London (302)	**21**	**25**	**6**	**7**	**13**
North East (301)	1	<0.5	<0.5	0	1
North West (300)	3	2	<0.5	0	0
South East (300)	**21**	**23**	2	**6**	**12**
South West (302)	5	6	1	<0.5	0
West Midlands (300)	7	15	1	4	3
Yorkshire and the Humber (304)	7	7	1	1	3
Northern Ireland (300)	4	2	0	0	0
Scotland (300)	4	3	<0.5	<0.5	1
Wales (302)	3	7	0	2	1

Q45. In which country were you born?
Unweighted bases for 2025 in parentheses: all respondents
Note: Romania is included in the EU proportion and Albania is included in the non-EU proportion. In neither case, therefore, are these individual country proportions additional to the respective EU/non-EU proportions
Note: figures in bold are statistically higher than the average at the 95% confidence level

Focusing on specific construction trades, there is a higher-than-average proportion of construction workers from EU countries among plasterers (32% from the EU, compared to an average of 10% from the EU for all trades).

There is a higher-than-average proportion of construction workers from non-EU countries among bankspersons (46%, compared to an average of 12%) and labourers/general operatives (19%).

As was the case in 2022, around one in six agency (14%) and self-employed (15%) construction workers originate from EU countries, compared with just 7% of directly-employed workers who are from the EU.

The proportion of agency construction workers from non-EU countries has almost doubled since 2022, from 13% to 25% in the latest survey. Consequently, when the 14% of agency workers from the EU is added, around two in five (39%) agency construction workers are from outside the UK, as compared to 28% in 2022, and to 28% of those who are self-employed and 16% of those who are employed directly.

Holding of passports

Close to four in five (77%) construction workers hold a UK passport, in line with 2022 (78%), which was lower than the 89% who did so in 2018/19. The increase following the UK's exit from the EU in the proportion of those in Northern Ireland who hold a passport for another country (presumably mainly nationals of the Irish Republic working in Northern Ireland) has continued to rise, from 30% in 20018/19 to 48% in 2022 to 54% in the latest survey.

Around one in seven construction workers (15%, compared to 13% in 2022) hold a passport for another country, rising to 28% in the South East and 27% in London.

Less than one in twenty (3%) report not having a passport, compared to 7% in 2022 and 5% in 2018/19, with the remaining 5% preferring not to say.

Of those construction workers that were born outside of the UK or have a non-UK passport, 2% have dual citizenship, a decline on the 7% who did so in 2022, 64% have settled status (62% in 2022), 12% have pre-settled status (16% in 2022) and 6% have a sponsored Visa (5% in 2022).

Length of time living in the UK

Three quarters (76%) of construction workers have lived in the UK all their lives, lower than the 80% who had done so in 2022). Again, this varies greatly by region/nation, from virtually all in the North East (98%), the North West (93%), Scotland, Northern Ireland (both 92%) and Wales (90%), to around half in London (46%) and the South East (54%).

Where they have not lived in the UK all their lives, they are more likely to have lived in the UK for more than 5 years (18%) than for up to five years (4%), and this is particularly the case in London (43% more than 5 years and 9% up to five years), the South East (36% and 8% respectively) and the East of England (23% and 4% respectively).

Table 7: Length of time that construction workers have lived in the UK by region/nation

Row percentages	All their lives %	Up to 5 years %	More than 5 years %
UK (3,611)	76	4	18
East Midlands (300)	**83**	3	14
East of England (300)	73	4	**23**
London (302)	46	**8**	**43**
North East (301)	**98**	<0.5	2
North West (300)	**93**	1	5
South East (300)	54	**8**	**36**
South West (302)	**85**	3	8
West Midlands (300)	76	7	14
Yorkshire and the Humber (304)	80	4	12
Northern Ireland (300)	**92**	2	6
Scotland (300)	**92**	1	5
Wales (302)	**90**	2	6

Q39. How long have you lived in the UK?
Unweighted bases for 2025 in parentheses: all respondents
Note: figures in bold are statistically higher than the average at the 95% confidence level

Disability

In line with 2018/19 and 2022, amongst all construction workers, 3% report that they have a long-term illness, health problem, or disability which limits the type of work they can do. This rises to 10% of those aged 55+.

The most common illness/disability amongst these workers is a reduced physical capacity including inability to lift, carry or otherwise move everyday objects, debilitating pain, lack of strength, breath, energy or stamina, asthma, angina, and diabetes, mentioned by nearly a quarter (23%).

The only other illness/disability mentioned in significant numbers is hearing problems (18%), while mentions of diagnosed long Covid have reduced from 14% in 2022, to 2% in the latest survey.

Overall, 7% report being personally affected by at least one learning or sensory challenge when it comes to the type of work they can do in construction, most commonly, attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) and dyslexia, dysgraphia or dyscalculia, both mentioned by 3%.

Occupational profile

Current job role

All workers were asked what their current trade or occupation is at their site. Respondents in a supervisory role were asked to detail their trade/occupation background, as their supervisory roles would be asked about later in the survey. Table 8 summarises all the trades/occupations mentioned by at least 2% of the sample and compares this with the occupational profile from previous surveys.

As previously, labourers/general operatives account for the highest proportion of construction workers (29%) and to a significantly greater extent than has been the case previously (18% in 2022)[2].

There have also been significant increases in the proportion of site managers, from 9% in 2022 to 13% in the latest survey making this the second most prevalent role, and of technical workers, from 3% in 2022 to 7% in the latest survey.

By contrast, the proportion of carpenters/joiners and plant/machine operatives has reduced slightly, from 9% in 2022 to 7% in the latest survey in both instances, as has the proportion of bricklayers, from 10% in 2022 to 7% in 2025.

[2] This may be partly because, visits to construction sites were not pre-arranged in 2025, and thus, interviewers met with workers who just happened to be there. It may have resulted in more manual workers than skilled or management workers in the sample than previously.

Table 8: Occupational profile over time				
	2025 %	2022 %	2018/19 %	2015 %
Labourer/General operative	29	18	16	18
Site manager	13	9	11	8
Bricklayer	7	10	11	15
Carpenter/joiner	7	9	10	11
Plant/machine operative (e.g. Fork lift/JCB)	7	9	7	7
Technical e.g. surveyor, maintenance technician	7	3	4	2
Electrician	5	5	6	5
Plumber	3	3	4	5
Scaffolder	3	3	4	4
Dryliner	3	3	3	3
Roofer	2	3	2	2
Banksman/Banksperson	2	2	1	2
Painter/decorator	2	1	2	3
Unweighted bases	3,611	3,005	4,048	4,771

Q5. What is your current trade or occupation at this site?
Unweighted base: all respondents
Note: mentions ≥2%

Supervisory roles

Approaching three in ten (28%) construction workers interviewed for the 2025 survey say they perform a supervisory or management role on their site, in line with 2022 (28%, compared to 30% in 2018/19, 25% in 2015 and 17% in 2012).

The incidence of workers in a supervisory role is significantly higher than average in the South East (37%), Yorkshire and Humber (35%) and Scotland (34%).

In line with previous waves, the incidence of workers in a supervisory role increases with age, from 4% of 16- to 19-year-olds, peaking at 42% among those aged 55 to 59, and then reducing to 37% among those aged 60 or over.

Similarly, the incidence of workers in a supervisory role increases with length of time in the industry, from 7% of those in the industry for less than a year, to 35% of those in the industry for more than five years, and 45% of those in the industry for more than 20 years

As expected, workers who are directly employed by a company continue to be significantly more likely than those who are self-employed or work for an agency to perform a supervisory role (31% compared to 25% and 9% respectively).

These differences are summarised in the table below.

Table 9: Whether respondents perform a supervisory or management role

	Row percentages	Yes %	Sometimes, as required %	No %
Total	UK (3,611)	28	4	69
Age	16 to 19 (185)	4	2	**93**
	20 to 24 (393)	13	5	**82**
	25 to 34 (1,034)	21	2	**77**
	35 to 44 (870)	**32**	4	64
	45 to 54 (559)	**37**	5	58
	55 to 59 (292)	**42**	3	55
	60+ (240)	**37**	4	59
Ethnicity	White British (2,615)	28	4	68
	White Other (587)	27	2	71
	Ethnic minority (348)	21	3	**77**
Time in construction industry	Less than 1 year (239)	7	3	**90**
	1 to 2 years (232)	8	3	**89**
	2 to 5 years (565)	10	3	**87**
	5+ years (2,566)	**35**	4	61
Type of employment	Employed directly (2,221)	**31**	4	65
	Self- employed (1,159)	25	3	**72**
	Agency (210)	9	5	**85**

Q8. Do you perform a supervisory or management role on this site?
Unweighted bases in parentheses: all respondents
Note: figures in bold are statistically higher than the average at the 95% confidence level

Employment status

The extent to which construction workers report being employed directly has increased significantly, from 48% in 2022 to 59% in the latest survey, higher than at any time since the survey began in 2012.

There has been a corresponding decrease in the proportion who report being self-employed, from 42% in 2022 to 33% in the latest survey, the lowest level of self-employment reported since the survey began.

At 7%, the proportion working for an agency has remained largely consistent over time and is concentrated among those newer to the industry.

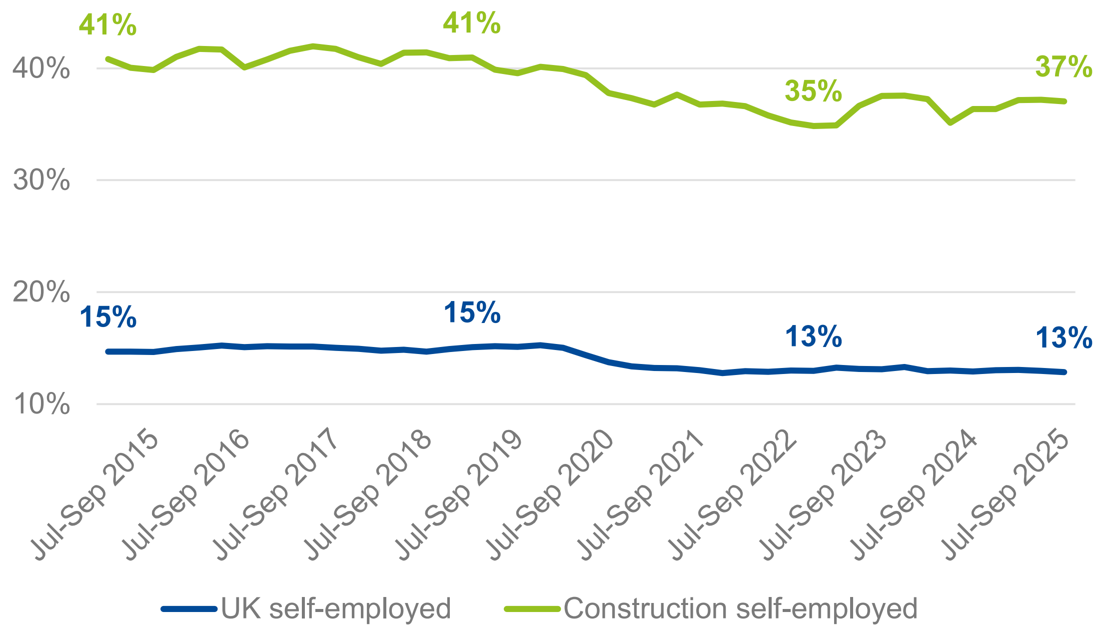
Table 10: Employment status over time and by length of time in the construction industry

	2025 %	2022 %	2018/19 %	2015 %	Years working in construction (2025)			
					<1 %	1-2 %	2-5 %	5+ %
Employed directly by a company	59	48	49	54	53	56	**64**	59
Self-employed	33	42	43	39	28	24	25	**36**
Working for an employment agency	7	9	7	6	**16**	**19**	**10**	5
Working on some other basis	<0.5	1	<0.5	<0.5	3	1	<0.5	<0.5
Unweighted bases	3,611	3,005	4,048	4,771	239	232	565	2,566

Q20. Are you currently….?
Unweighted base: all respondents
Note: figures in bold for 2025 are statistically higher than the average at the 95% confidence level

The cautionary note regarding the data, highlighting the impact of random variations in the composition of the sample, is relevant here. The survey should not be used to evidence wider trends in employment. Estimates from the Labour Force Survey indicate that, while there has been a downward trend in self-employment in the construction industry (and the wider UK) between 2018/19 and 2022, this has actually stabilised over recent years, as shown in the figure below.

Figure 1: Self-employment trends



Source: Labour Force Survey estimates

Within the survey sample, workers of White ethnic origin continue to be significantly more likely than those of ethnic minority origin to be employed directly (61% compared with 48%), whilst workers from an ethnic minority group are significantly more likely to be working for an employment agency (19%, compared with 6% of workers with White ethnic origins).

As has been the case in previous surveys, there are also a number of variations by region/nation, as table 11 summarises. The proportion of workers who are employed directly - 59% on average - is highest in the North East (97%), and is also higher than average in Scotland (82%), the East Midlands (75%), London (72%), the East of England and the North West (66%).

The proportion of construction workers who are self-employed - 33% on average - is higher than average in Northern Ireland and the West Midlands (both 52%), Yorkshire and the Humber (46%), the South East (45%) and the South West (43%).

Agency employment is higher than average in the South East (20% compared to 7%).

Table 11: Employment status by region/nation

Row percentages	Employed directly %	Self-employed %	Working for employment agency %
UK (3,611)	59	33	7
East Midlands (300)	**75**	18	7
East of England (300)	**71**	27	3
London (302)	**72**	24	5
North East (301)	**97**	2	<0.5
North West (300)	**66**	30	4
South East (300)	35	**45**	**20**
South West (302)	48	**43**	9
West Midlands (300)	38	**52**	8
Yorkshire and the Humber (304)	46	**46**	7
Northern Ireland (300)	45	**52**	0
Scotland (300)	**82**	14	4
Wales (302)	63	32	4

Q20. Are you currently …….?
Unweighted bases in parentheses: all respondents
Note: figures in bold are statistically higher than the average at the 95% confidence level

Employment contract basis

Close to three in ten (29%) construction workers are employed on a temporary, rather than a permanent basis (70%), much in line with 2022 (29% and 67% respectively).

Construction workers of an ethnic minority background are more likely to be employed on a temporary contract (49% compared to 26% of White construction workers), and this is to a greater extent than was the case in 2022 (42% and 28% respectively).

The survey shows that 9% of the workforce is employed by an agency, and of these, 83% are on temporary contracts, in line with 2022 (82%), as compared to 53% of self-employed workers and 9% of directly employed workers.

While the overall proportion of temporary workers in the workforce, at 29%, has remained stable, there have been significant fluctuations in some regions/nations since 2022, as shown in table 12 below.

Temporary workers are more prevalent than average in the West Midlands (52%), the South East (45%), the East of England (37%), Northern Ireland (36%) and Yorkshire and the Humber (34%).

Table 12: Proportion of workers employed on a temporary basis (including fixed-term contracts) by region/nation over time

	2025 %	2022 %	2018/19 %
UK (3,611)	29	29	28
East Midlands (300)	21	31	16
East of England (300)	**37**	37	38
London (302)	19	30	35
North East (301)	1	34	10
North West (300)	29	29	10
South East (300)	**45**	32	34
South West (302)	20	22	43
West Midlands (300)	**52**	26	27
Yorkshire and the Humber (304)	**34**	25	34
Northern Ireland (300)	**36**	43	10
Scotland (300)	12	21	22
Wales (302)	21	30	26

Q21. Are you employed on a temporary or a permanent basis?
Unweighted bases for 2025 in parentheses: all respondents
Note: figures in bold for 2025 are statistically higher than the average at the 95% confidence level

Hours worked

Close to two thirds (64%) of construction workers work between 40 and 49 hours per week, up on the 59% who did so in 2022, while one in six (17%) work fewer hours than this.

The proportion who reported working more than 50 hours a week has continued to decline, from 23% in 2018/19 to 19% in 2022 and to 16% in the latest survey. This decline is seen in many regions/nations, significantly so in the East Midlands (from 19% to 8%), the East of England (from 19% to 13%), London (from 33% to 12%), the North East (from 12% to 4%), and Scotland (from 25% to 11%).

By contrast, there has been a significant increase in the proportion of construction workers who report working more than 50 hours per week in Yorkshire and the Humber (from 14% to 26%) and Northern Ireland (from 5% to 16%).

Table 13: Proportion of workers that typically work 50 or more hours per week by region/nation over time

	2025 %	2022 %	2018/19 %
UK (3,611)	16	19	23
East Midlands (300)	8	19	10
East of England (300)	13	19	21
London (302)	12	33	39
North East (301)	4	12	12
North West (300)	13	12	22
South East (300)	**26**	21	30
South West (302)	15	16	26
West Midlands (300)	18	16	22
Yorkshire and the Humber (304)	**26**	14	22
Northern Ireland (300)	16	5	9
Scotland (300)	11	25	8
Wales (302)	11	15	13

Q22. How many hours do you tend to work each week nowadays?
Unweighted bases for 2025 in parentheses: all respondents
Note: figures in bold for 2025 are statistically higher than the average at the 95% confidence level

The decline in 2025 is at least partly driven by the decrease in self-employment, as a higher proportion of self-employed workers work 50 hours or more (18% cf. 14% of those directly employed).

Work histories

Time in the sector

Compared with previous years, table 14 shows little change regarding how long workers have worked in the construction sector, with close to three in ten (28%) having been in the industry for more than 20 years, and the same proportion (28%) for up to 5 years. Close to half (48%) have been in the industry for up to 10 years.

Table 14: Years spent working in the construction sector over time (cumulative)

	2025 %	2022 %	2018/19 %	2015 %
Less than 6 months	3	3	3	4
Up to a year	6	7	6	8
Up to 2 years	12	14	12	14
Up to 5 years	28	29	28	26
Up to 10 years	48	48	42	44
Up to 20 years	72	70	68	69
More than 20 years	28	30	32	31
Unweighted bases	3,611	3,005	4,048	4,771

Q1. How long in total have you worked in the construction industry?
Unweighted bases for 2025 in parentheses: all respondents

As would be expected, length of time in the industry increases with age, with close to three quarters of all construction workers aged 45 and over having more than 20 years' experience of working in the sector (72%, as in 2022, 76% in 2018/19 and 77% in 2015).

Workers of White British origin are more likely to have worked in the construction industry for longer compared with workers from a White Other origin or an Ethnic Minority origin (56% have 10+ years' experience, compared with 45% of White Other and 34% of workers from an ethnic minority group).

Workers who are directly employed (51%) or self-employed (57%) are more likely than those who work for an agency (28%) to have worked in the construction industry for at least 10 years, as the following table highlights.

Table 15: Years spent working in the construction sector

	Row percentages	Less than a year %	1 to 2 years %	2 to 5 years %	5 to 10 years %	10 to 20 years %	More than 20 years %
Total	UK (3,611)	6	6	16	20	24	28
Age	16 to 19 (185)	**56**	**22**	21	1	0	0
	20 to 24 (393)	**12**	**22**	**43**	21	1	1
	25 to 34 (1,034)	5	7	**26**	**38**	24	1
	35 to 44 (870)	2	3	7	19	**46**	22
	45 to 54 (559)	2	2	4	6	25	**61**
	55 to 59 (292)	2	1	3	3	9	**81**
	60+ (240)	2	<0.5	1	4	6	**86**
Ethnicity	White British (2,615)	5	5	14	18	23	**33**
	White Other (587)	6	6	16	**27**	**27**	18
	Ethnic minority (348)	**12**	**13**	**23**	17	22	12
Type of employment	Employed directly (2,221)	6	6	**17**	19	23	28
	Self-employed (1,159)	5	5	12	20	**27**	**30**
	Agency (210)	**15**	**17**	**23**	17	14	14

Q1. How long in total have you worked in the construction industry?
Unweighted bases in parentheses: all respondents
Note: figures in bold are statistically higher than the average at the 95% confidence level

Pre-construction employment histories

Three quarters (78%) of construction workers have only ever worked in the construction industry, an uplift on the 71% who had done so in 2022, including 65% who have worked in construction pretty much continuously, maintaining the upward trend on this measure since 2015 (55%). This also includes 9% who have had spells of being out of work, an uplift on the 6% who reported this in 2022, and 3% for whom this is their first job.

Overall, 13% report that their first job was not in construction, a decline on the 18% who did so in 2022.

Table 16: Statement that best describes respondents' work histories since leaving full time education and starting their first job in construction over time

	2025 %	2022 %	2018/19 %	2015 %
I've worked in construction pretty much continuously (and not worked in any other industry)	65	61	56	55
I have only worked in construction jobs but have had spells of being out of work	9	6	4	6
My first job was in construction, but I've also worked in other sorts of jobs in one or more other industries	8	8	7	8
My first job after full time education was NOT in construction. I moved into the industry after working in other sort(s) of jobs	13	18	23	19
This is my first job. I haven't worked in any other industry.	3	4	7	9
This is my first job in construction, but I have worked in other sorts of jobs in one or more other industries	2	4	3	3
Unweighted bases	3,611	3,005	4,048	4,771

Q2. Since leaving full time education and starting your first job in construction, which one of the following best describes your work history?
Unweighted bases: all respondents

The likelihood that workers have worked continuously in construction - 65% on average - increases with age, up to 73% of workers aged 45 or over, whilst, as would be expected, younger workers are more likely to say that this is their first job (23% of 16 to 19 year olds compared with an average of 3% for workers of all ages).

Table 17: Statement that best describes respondents' work histories since leaving full time education and starting their first job in construction by age

	Aged 16 to 19 %	Aged 20 to 24 %	Aged 25 to 44 %	Aged 45+ %
I've worked in construction pretty much continuously (and not worked in any other industry)	56	63	62	**73**
I have only worked in construction jobs but have had spells of being out of work	7	7	**12**	7
My first job was in construction, but I've also worked in other sorts of jobs in one or more other industries	4	8	**9**	6
My first job after full time education was NOT in construction. I moved into the industry after working in other sort(s) of jobs	7	11	**14**	12
This is my first job. I haven't worked in any other industry.	**23**	**7**	2	1
This is my first job in construction, but I have worked in other sorts of jobs in one or more other industries	3	**4**	2	2
Unweighted bases	185	393	1,904	1,091

Q2. Since leaving full time education and starting your first job in construction, which one of the following best describes your work history?
Unweighted bases: all respondents
Note: figures in bold are statistically higher than the average at the 95% confidence level

While the proportion of respondents who have worked in other sectors before construction continues to be significantly higher amongst those employed by an agency (19%, compared to an average of 13%), this is to a much lesser extent than has been the case previously (30% in 2022 and 37% in 2018/19).

By region/nation, the proportion of workers who have previously worked in other sectors varies from 23% in the South West and 20% in Yorkshire and the Humber, to 9% in the North East and 5% in the East of England.

Those who had worked in other sectors before starting their construction careers were asked to give details of what they were doing immediately before they started working in construction. As in previous years, the main sectors from which workers had moved are wholesale/retail (18%), accommodation (15%), manufacturing (14%) and transportation and storage (13%).

Table 18: Industry worked in before starting work in the construction sector over time

	2025 %	2022 %	2018/19 %	2015 %
G – Wholesale and retail trade; repair of motor vehicles and motorcycles	18	20	19	22
I – Accommodation	15	12	2	10
C – Manufacturing	14	11	45	20
H – Transportation and storage	13	8	6	10
Unweighted bases	536	624	862	983

Q3. What job were you doing immediately before you started working in construction?
Unweighted base: where first job was not in construction
Note: sectors mentioned by >5% of respondents

As in 2022, in terms of the job roles that respondents have held in other sectors, the highest proportions were in skilled trades occupations (20%) and elementary administration and service occupations (27%).

Table 19: Job roles undertaken in other sectors over time

	2025 %	2022 %	2018/19 %
Managers, Directors and Senior Officials	4	5	19
Professional Occupations	3	2	10
Associate Professional and Technical Occupations	12	10	28
Administrative and Secretarial Occupations	2	3	6
Skilled Trades Occupations	20	22	27
Caring, Leisure and Other Service Occupations	3	3	<0.5
Sales and Customer Service Occupations	11	13	3
Process, Plant and Machine Operatives	12	13	3
Elementary Administration and Service Occupations	27	22	2
Unweighted bases	536	624	862

Q3. What job were you doing immediately before you started working in construction?
Unweighted bases: all respondents

Occupational switching and progression within construction

All workers were asked whether they have worked in differing construction roles or occupations whilst working in the construction industry. Overall, 26% of all construction workers have worked in more than one construction trade or occupation whilst working in the construction industry, a significant decline on the 35% who had done so in 2022, and the 36% who had done so in 2018/19.

Naturally, the proportion of workers who have had more than one role increases with age, from 13% of those aged under 25 (22% in 2022) to 34% of those aged 45 or over (39% in 2022).

Underlining the greater propensity for construction workers in a supervisory role to have worked in more than one construction trade or occupation (41% compared to an average of 26%), site managers are significantly more likely than average to have done so (53%), as has been the case previously.

Those currently in the following roles are also more likely than average (26%) to have worked in more than one construction trade or occupation:

- plant/machine operatives (44%)
- plasterers (43%)
- roofer (36%)
- dryliners (35%)

Those currently in the following roles are less likely than average (26%) to have worked in more than one construction trade or occupation:

- painters/decorators (8%)
- electrician (10%)
- plumbers (12%)
- bricklayers (14%)
- labourers/general operatives (14%)
- carpenters/joiners (19%)

Construction workers who have worked in other roles/occupations within the construction industry, other than the role they are currently in, were asked to specify which trades/occupations they had previously worked in, with each worker able to list all previous occupations. Amongst the 26% of all construction workers that had worked in at least one other role/occupation they are most likely to have previously worked as a labourer/general operative (35%), while 15% had previously worked as a carpenter/joiner and 9% as a bricklayer. This is largely in line with previous waves.

Table 20: Previous occupations/trades in the construction sector over time

	2025 %	2022 %	2018/19 %	2015 %
Labourer/general operative	35	39	34	30
Carpenter/joiner	15	15	19	18
Bricklayer	9	12	12	13
Plant/machine operative	6	10	10	10
Plasterer	6	5	8	7
Banksman/banksperson	6	7	6	7
Site manager	5	4	5	5
Technical	5	2	3	4
Dryliner	4	5	8	7
Roofer	4	4	8	9
Painter/decorator	4	4	7	8
Plumber	4	3	5	5
Electrician	3	2	5	3
Pipe fitter	3	2	4	5
Unweighted base	925	1,082	1,328	1,576

Q7. If you have worked in more than one construction trade or occupation, which was your 1st trade, 2nd trade and so on? (excluding current trade)
Unweighted base: workers that have switched occupations within construction
Note: occupations mentioned by >2% of respondents

Future career plans

Construction workers were asked how likely it is they will still want to work in construction in five years' time. Overall, seven in ten (70%) feel they definitely will, or that it is very likely that they will still want to, in line with 2022 (71%), remaining somewhat lower than the 74% who felt this was the case in 2018/19.

Nevertheless, the proportion who feel it would be unlikely that they will still want to work in the construction sector has remained at around one in twenty (4%, compared to 5% in 2022).

The remainder feel it is quite likely (13%), or that they hoped to be retired (4%), or were unsure (7%).

Age is the predominant factor in this respect. Most obviously, the proportion that hopes to be retired in five years' time increases to 37% of construction workers aged 60 and over. The proportion that felt they definitely will still want to work in the construction sector in five years peaks amongst 45-54 year olds (58%).

Table 21: Likelihood of still wanting to be working in the construction sector in five years' time by age

	All %	Aged 16 to 19 %	Aged 20 to 24 %	Aged 25 to 44 %	Aged 45 to 54 %	Aged 55 to 59 %	Aged 60+ %
Definitely will be	47	46	39	48	**58**	48	26
Very likely	23	23	27	**25**	23	18	16
Quite likely	13	**18**	**19**	**14**	9	10	7
Quite unlikely	2	1	3	2	3	3	3
Very unlikely	2	1	2	2	1	3	3
Definitely will not be	2	3	2	1	1	3	4
Hope to be retired	4	1	1	1	1	**12**	**37**
Don't know	7	7	8	6	5	4	3
Unweighted bases	3,611	185	393	1,904	559	292	240

Q38A. How likely would you say it is that in 5 years' time you will still want to be working in construction?
Unweighted bases: all respondents
Note: figures in bold are statistically higher than the average at the 95% confidence level

The 4% of construction workers who felt it was unlikely that they will still want to work in the construction sector in five years' time were asked the reasons why this was the case.

Construction workers continue to be most likely to cite the fact that work outside of construction might be less physical, and to a greater extent than was the case in 2022 (39% compared to 29%), followed by working closer to home (23%) and more suitable hours/conditions (22%), in line with 2022.

Table 22: Reasons for not wanting to be working in the construction sector in five years' time – prompted, multiple response

	2025 %	2022 %	2018/19 %
Less physical working outside of construction	39	29	32
Working outside of construction will mean you can work closer to home	23	22	3
More suitable hours/conditions outside of construction	22	23	16
Will be better paid outside of construction	14	16	19
Use your skills/abilities better outside of construction	14	13	16
More interesting work outside of construction, bored	12	16	27
Easier to get work/more security outside of construction	8	6	7
More responsibility in jobs outside of construction	2	6	4
No particular reason/don't know	2	9	8
Other	4	19	20
Unweighted base	226	199	xxx

Q38B. Are any of these reasons why you think it is unlikely that you'll still want to be working in construction in 5 years' time?
Unweighted base: those unlikely to be in construction in five years' time

Thinking further about their future plans in construction, 77% of all construction workers would like to carry on in the same trade or occupation, somewhat lower than 2022 (80%), while 6% would like to change their construction trade/occupation (compared to 7% in 2022) and 4% would like to leave the industry (compared to 5% in 2022).

One in twenty (5%) would like to take on a managerial/supervisory position, rising to 9% of those aged 16 to 24, and 8% are unsure.

Construction workers currently working for an agency continue to be more likely to want to change their trade or occupation (17% compared to 6% of those employed directly and 4% of those who are self-employed).

Labourers/general operatives are the only trade/occupation that is more likely than average to want to change trade/occupation (14%) and to want to leave the construction industry (7%).

In previous iterations of the survey, amongst those who would like to change trade or occupation, the highest proportion said they would like to be a site manager (25% in 2022). However, in 2025, this has reduced to 7%, and the most frequently mentioned trade/occupation is now bricklayer (17%), followed by carpenter/joiner (15%), with other trades/occupations mentioned by fewer than one in ten.

As was the case in 2022, two in three (68%) of construction workers who would like to change trade or occupation believe they will require further training or qualifications to do this other kind of work, a lower proportion than was the case in 2018/19 (87%) and in 2015 (77%).

The most frequently cited reason for wanting to change trade or occupation is the expectation that they would be better paid (60%), followed by wanting to use their skills/abilities better (42%). A quarter (25%) want more responsibility and one in five (21%) believe it will be less physical.

Results are largely in line with 2022, although a greater proportion mention greater demand (28% compared to 18%) and a lower proportion mention more interesting work (16% compared to 28%).

Table 23: Reasons for wanting to change trade/occupation over time

	2025 %	2022 %
Will be better paid	60	65
Use your skills/abilities better	42	43
In demand in the future / future opportunities	28	18
More responsibility	25	23
Less physical	21	21
More interesting work/bored of what you're doing/a change	16	28
Easier to get that sort of work/more security	13	11
More suitable hours/conditions	9	10
Will mean you can work closer to home	4	5
No particular reason/don't know	6	3
Unweighted base	354	373

Q36A. What are your main reasons for wanting to change?
Unweighted base: where workers would like to change trade/occupation

Qualifications and skills

Overview

This section of the report explores construction workers' qualification levels and other accreditations, examining differences by key variables such as region/nation, occupation and length of experience. The issues covered in this section include:

- the range of skill cards and certificates held by workers
- construction-related qualifications: gained before starting work in the construction sector; since starting work in the sector; and being worked towards
- workers' self-perceived need for additional training in basic skills

Construction skill cards and certificates

The vast majority (93%) of construction workers report holding a skill card or certificate (e.g. CSCS or CSR), in line with 2022 (also 93%), but it is a lower proportion than the 97% who did so in 2018/19 and earlier surveys. The proportion who reported holding no cards remains at 6%.

As shown in the table below, almost all workers in the South East (97%), the West Midlands (96%) and the North West (95%) report having a card, while this proportion falls to 89% in the North East, South West and in Scotland.

Table 24: Proportion of workers who have a skill card/certificate, by region/nation over time

Row percentages	2025 %	2022 %	2018/19 %	2015 %	2012 %
Total (3,611)	93	93	97	96	97
East Midlands (300)	92	90	93	93	99
East of England (300)	91	91	97	96	98
London (302)	93	92	98	98	96
North East (301)	89	97	94	96	99
North West (300)	**95**	91	98	97	99
South East (300)	**97**	93	98	98	96
South West (302)	89	97	97	96	97
West Midlands (300)	**96**	91	99	98	100
Yorkshire and the Humber (304)	93	94	98	97	97
Northern Ireland (300)	94	97	97	90	100
Scotland (300)	89	91	99	88	98
Wales (302)	93	95	92	92	92

Q12. Which type of construction skill certificate or card, if any, do you currently hold?
Unweighted bases for 2025 in parentheses: all respondents
Note: figures in bold for 2025 are statistically higher than the average at the 95% confidence level

As in previous surveys, the incidence of workers holding skill cards or certificates remains lower amongst the youngest workers (16 to 19 year olds) and those who are very new to the construction industry (having worked in the industry for less than a year) at 81% of in both cases.

Those employed directly (91%) are less likely than the self-employed or those who work for an agency to have a skill card/certificate (both 96%).

Table 25: Proportion of workers who have a skill card/certificate over time

	Row percentages	2025 %	2022 %	2018/19 %	2015 %
Total	UK (3,611)	93	93	97	96
Age	16 to 19 years (185)	81	83	85	86
	20 to 24 years (393)	**95**	89	97	95
	25 to 44 years (1,904)	94	93	98	99
	45+ years (1,091)	92	94	98	97
Time in construction industry	Less than 1 year (239)	81	81	89	89
	1 to 2 years (232)	91	79	97	86
	2 to 5 years (565)	94	92	96	96
	5+ years (2,566)	94	95	98	98
Type of employment	Employed directly (2,221)	91	90	96	97
	Self- employed (1,159)	**96**	96	98	99
	Agency (210)	**96**	90	97	92
Location before working in construction sector in UK	UK/ROI national (3,485)	93	93	97	97
	Migrant worker (126)	91	91	98	98

Q12. Which type of construction skill certificate or card, if any, do you currently hold?
Unweighted bases for 2025 in parentheses: all respondents
Note: figures in bold for 2025 are statistically higher than the average at the 95% confidence level

In terms of the type of skill card or certificate held by workers, the CSCS (Construction Skills Certification Scheme (GB)) remains the most commonly held (84%), returning to levels seen in 2018/19 (85%) following a dip in 2022 (80%).

The proportion holding the CISRS (Construction Industry Scaffolders Record Scheme) is consistent with previous surveys (3%), while there has been a decrease in the proportion holding the CPCS (Construction Plant Competence Scheme), from 14% in 2022 to 7% in 2025.

Overall, 3% hold the CSR (Construction Skills Register (NI)) card/certificate, which translates to 92% of workers in Northern Ireland, which is somewhat lower than the 96% who held it in 2022, but remains higher than earlier surveys, and higher than the proportion holding the CSCS (GB) (84%).

Table 26: Type of skill card/certificate held over time

	2025 %	2022 %	2018/19 %	2015 %
Any card/certificate	93	93	97	96
CSCS (Construction Skills Certification Scheme) (GB)	84	80	85	86
CSR (Construction Skills Register) (NI)	3	5	3	3
CISRS (Construction Industry Scaffolders Record Scheme)	2	3	3	4
CPCS (Construction Plant Competence Scheme)	7	14	11	13
Other	4	6	4	4
Unweighted bases	3,611	3,005	4,048	4,771

Q12. Which type of construction skill certificate or card, if any, do you currently hold?
Unweighted bases: all respondents

By current job role, while scaffolders are less likely than average to hold CSCS (59%) they are more likely to hold CISRS (45%) and 98% of this group hold at least one card or certificate.

Similarly, while electricians are also less likely than average to hold CSCS (60%), they are more likely to hold another type of card or certificate (34%), presumably specific to their trade.

Occupations in which workers are less likely to hold any skills cards/certificates are:

- technical: 16% hold no cards
- roofers: 12% hold no cards
- painters/decorators: 11% hold no cards
- plasterers: 11% hold no cards

Workers who hold either a CSCS or CSR card were asked what colour their cards are, and this is summarised in tables 26 and 27.

Overall, 3% of CSCS card holders have Red cards, down on the 8% who did so in 2022. Four in ten (40%) have Green cards, an uplift on the 30% who did so in 2022, reflecting the increased proportion of labourers/general operatives in the most recent sample.

Three in ten (30%) have Blue cards, down on 2022 (34%), and one in ten (10%) have Gold cards, again down on 2022 (15%). One in ten (9%) have a Black card, up on 6% in 2022.

Other card types are held by very few workers.

By region/nation the following key differences exist:

- Green cards are more prevalent than average in the North East (53%), and London (49%), and less prevalent than average in Scotland (30%), Yorkshire and the Humber (31%) and the North West (33%)
- Blue cards are more prevalent than average in the North West (36%) and less prevalent than average in London (23%) and the North East (25%)
- Gold cards are more prevalent than average in Yorkshire and the Humber (15%), Scotland (15%), Wales (14%) and the North East (13%)

Table 27: Colour of CSCS card held over time

	2025 %	2022 %	2018/19 %	2015 %
Red – Trainee	2	5	4	5
Red – Experienced worker card	1	3	3	2
Green Labourer Card	40	30	33	35
Blue – skilled	30	34	29	27
Gold – advanced craft/skilled worker	6	8	11	18
Gold – supervisor card	4	7	6	
Black – manager card	9	6	6	5
Academically Qualified Persons Card	2	2	3	
Professionally Qualified Persons Card	1	1	1	
Provisional Card	<0.5	<0.5	<0.5	
Construction Site Visitor Card	<0.5	<0.5	<0.5	
Apprentice Card	1	1	1	
Other	2	1	2	2
Unsure	1	2	2	4
Unweighted bases	2,861	2,318	3,398	3,975

Q13. What colour is your CSCS card?
Unweighted base: where hold CSCS card

CSCS card colours also vary significantly according to current occupation/trade, as table 28 summarises. Some significant differences include those that labourers/general operatives are most likely to hold Green cards (79%), while plant/machine operatives are most likely to hold Blue cards (70%), as are dryliners (56%), bricklayers (50%), carpenters/joiners (49%), plumbers (46%) and scaffolders (42%).

Electricians are more likely than average to hold a Gold card (44%), and site managers are more likely to hold Gold (19%) and Black (44%) cards. Those in technical occupations are more likely than average to hold Black cards (23%).

Table 28: Colour of CSCS card held by current occupation

Row percentages	Red %	Green %	Blue %	Gold %	Black %
All (3,611)	3	40	30	10	9
Bricklayer (209)	4	22	**50**	**18**	1
Carpenter/joiner (191)	3	20	**49**	**18**	5
Dryliner (94)	2	34	**56**	3	1
Electrician (108)	3	23	16	**44**	3
Labourer/general operative (902)	1	**79**	15	2	1
Painter/decorator (64)	3	39	**52**	4	0
Plant/machine operative (181)	3	18	**70**	3	2
Plumber (87)	1	23	**46**	**21**	2
Roofer (63)	0	43	**42**	8	1
Scaffolder (64)	3	36	**42**	8	6
Site manager (370)	5	5	9	**19**	**44**
Technical (178)	**8**	9	15	13	**23**
Other (79)	3	42	30	5	9

Q13. What colour is your CSCS card?
Unweighted bases in parentheses: where hold CSCS card
Note: figures in bold are statistically higher than the average at the 95% confidence level

The types of CSR cards held by 3% of all construction workers are summarised in table that follows. There are significant differences in 2025 compared with previous surveys, and a high proportion of workers mentioned they had ‘White’ cards which were not included in the list of possible CSR cards.

Table 29: Colour of CSR card held over time

	2025 %	2022 %	2018/19 %	2015 %
Red – Apprenticeship/Trainee	2	3	5	7
Red – Trained Plant Operator	<0.5	1	1	2
Red – Trainee Supervisor/Manager for undergraduates/ recent graduates	1	3	2	1
Green – Construction Operative (for general site workers)	10	31	29	29
Blue – Operative/ Craft	12	25	20	11
Blue – Plant Operator	3	10	5	7
Blue – Basic Scaffolder	1	<0.5	<0.5	4
Gold – Craft/Supervisor Card	14	20	26	29
Gold – Advanced Scaffolder	1	2	1	1
Platinum – Manager Card	6	1	2	2
Black – Senior Managers Card	2	1	3	1
Other	41	0	4	5
Unsure	8	3	3	2
Unweighted base	287	284	176	220

Q13. What colour is your CSR card?
Unweighted bases: where hold CSR card

Construction qualifications held

Respondents were asked about the qualifications they held that were directly related to construction after leaving full-time education and starting their first proper job in construction.

Overall, three quarters (75%) report that they had no formal qualifications relating to construction when they first started working in the construction industry, which returns this measure to levels seen in 2018/19 (72%) and 2015 (75%), following what might be regarded as an anomaly in 2022, when 47% say they had no formal construction-related qualifications when they first started working in the construction industry.

Workers in the South East are significantly more likely than average to report having had formal construction-related qualifications when they first started working in the construction industry (46% compared to an average of 21%), while those in the following regions/nations were more likely than average (75%) to report having **no** formal qualifications prior to joining the industry:

- Northern Ireland (96%)
- East Midlands (92%)
- North East (92%)
- East of England (90%)
- West Midlands (80%)

The proportion saying they had formal qualifications relating to construction when they first started working in the construction industry remains higher amongst younger workers (27% of those aged under 25, compared to 20% of those aged 25+).

Construction workers from an ethnic minority are more likely than White workers to report having formal qualifications when they first started working (31% compared to 19%), as are agency workers (37%) and self-employed workers (24%, as compared to 17% of those employed directly).

By current trade/occupation the proportion of workers who started their construction careers with no formal qualifications is highest amongst roofers (87%), plasterers (86%), plant/machine operatives (85%), scaffolders (84%), labourers/general operatives (83%) and those in other trades (88%).

By contrast, those in technical trades (34%), site managers (32%), electricians (31%) and carpenters/joiners (29%) are more likely than average to report having formal qualifications when they first started in the industry.

After being asked about the construction-related qualifications they had when they first started their career, all workers were asked what other formal qualifications relevant to construction they have gained since starting in the industry. By combining the responses to both these questions, the highest level of construction qualification held at the time of interview (including the type of qualification, the subject of the qualification, and its level) can be derived.

For the first time in the 2025 survey respondents were prompted with drop-down lists to help them identify the relevant type, subject and level of qualification. Prior to this these questions were gathered on an unprompted basis, and coded from open response. Although this approach increases the level of accuracy in the data collected, comparisons with previous iterations of the survey, where data was based on open response, are inadvisable.

Overall, 52% of all construction workers held some sort of construction-related qualification at the time of interview, and this increases from 38% of those aged 16 to 19 to 61% of those aged 45 or over. Self-employed workers are more likely than average to hold a qualification related to construction (60%)

Table 30: Proportion of workers that hold any construction-specific qualifications

	Row percentages	**2025 %**
Total	UK (3,611)	52
Age	16 to 19 years (185)	38
	20 to 24 years (393)	52
	25 to 44 years (1,904)	50
	45+ years (1,091)	**61**
Ethnicity	White British (2,615)	**55**
	White Other (587)	47
	Ethnic minority (348)	47
Time in construction industry	Less than 1 year (239)	40
	1 to 2 years (232)	35
	2 to 5 years (565)	36
	5+ years (2,566)	**59**
Type of employment	Employed directly (2,221)	51
	Self- employed (1,159)	**56**
	Agency (210)	49
Location before working in construction sector in UK	UK/ROI national (3,485)	**53**
	Migrant worker (126)	43

Q15. What construction-related qualifications did you hold when you got your first proper job in construction? / Q16.What, if any, FORMAL qualifications that are relevant to construction have you gained since starting work in the industry?
Unweighted bases in parentheses: all respondents
Note: figures in bold are statistically higher than the average at the 95% confidence level

The proportion of workers who hold qualifications is higher than average in the following regions:

- South East (70%)
- Yorkshire and the Humber (60%)

The proportion of workers who hold qualifications is lower than average in the following regions:

- North East (32%)
- East Midlands (36%)
- East of England (43%)
- London (43%)

The proportion of workers who hold qualifications is higher than average among those currently in the following trades/occupations:

- site managers (81%)
- technical trades (73%)
- plumbers (72%)
- electricians (70%)
- bricklayers (63%)
- carpenters/joiners (61%)
- plant/machine operatives (58%)

The proportion of workers who hold qualifications is lower than average among those currently in the following trades/occupations:

- labourers/general operatives (27%)
- painters/decorators (37%)
- other trades (40%)

Type of construction qualifications held

Based on the qualifications that workers had when they first started working in the construction industry, and any they have gained since, the qualifications most likely to be held by construction workers are NVQ/SVQ qualifications (38%).

While direct comparisons with previous surveys cannot be made, this mirrors the most prevalent type of qualification held.

Around one in ten (8%) hold City and Guilds, and one in twenty hold an apprenticeship or a degree (both 5%).

Table 31: Main type of qualification held

	2025 %
NVQ/SVQ	38
City and Guilds	8
Apprenticeship	5
Degree	5
HNC/HND/BTEC Higher	3
Construction Award	1
Other	6
Unweighted bases	3,611

Q15. What construction-related qualifications did you hold when you got your first proper job in construction? / Q16.What, if any, FORMAL qualifications that are relevant to construction have you gained since starting work in the industry?
Unweighted base: all respondents

In terms of the highest level of qualification held, 6% hold a Level 1 qualification, 20% Level 2, 10% Level 3 and 16% Level 4 or above.

Additional formal training

Self-assessment of basic skills needs

Given the need for construction workers to read instructions and record information it is important to ensure that the workforce has the skills required to perform these tasks. The survey therefore asked all workers whether they perceive the need for training in any of a list of specified basic skills to help with their work.

Overall, one in five (20%) workers believe they would benefit from some form of training in basic skills, in line with 2022 (19%). The specific skills needs are also very much in line with 2022, which saw increases over 2018/19, with one in ten (10%) believing they would benefit from training in reading, and a similar proportion in speaking English (9%), writing (8%) and maths (8%).

Just 2% mention a need for training in digital skills.

Table 32: Self-assessed need for training in basic skills over time

	2025 %	2022 %	2018/19 %	2015 %	2012 %
ANY	**20**	**19**	**11**	**14**	**20**
Reading	10	9	5	6	9
Speaking English	9	9	6	7	8
Writing	8	7	5	6	9
Maths	8	6	5	6	10
Digital skills	2	4	Na	Na	Na
Unweighted bases	3,611	3,005	4,048	4,771	4,933

Q37. Construction jobs need workers to read instructions and record information more than they used to. Would any training in any of the following help you with your work?
Unweighted bases: all respondents

Those aged under 25 are the most likely to report a need for training in basic skills – 32% of those aged 16 to 19 and 28% of those aged 20 to 24. Both these age groups are most likely to mention a need for training in maths (18% and 14% respectively), but at least one in ten of both groups identify a need for training in each of the other skills, with the exception of digital skills.

Table 33: Self-assessed need for training in basic skills by age

	Total %	Aged 16 to 19 %	Aged 20 to 24 %	Aged 25 to 44 %	Aged 45+ %
ANY	20	**32**	**28**	20	16
Reading	10	**16**	**13**	10	7
Speaking English	9	11	**13**	**11**	5
Writing	8	**14**	10	9	6
Maths	8	**18**	**14**	7	6
Digital skills	2	**4**	**3**	2	1
Unweighted bases	3,611	185	393	1,904	1,091

Q37. Construction jobs need workers to read instructions and record information more than they used to. Would any training in any of the following help you with your work?
Unweighted bases: all respondents
Note: figures in bold are statistically higher than the average at the 95% confidence level

Many regions are in line with the average in this respect, as shown in table 34, but there are some regional differences:

- workers in the South East are twice as likely as the average (40%) to believe they need some training in basic skills, particularly in relation to reading (20%), writing (19%) and speaking English (19%)
- three in ten (31%) workers in Northern Ireland believe they need some training in basic skills, most notably Maths (19%), digital skills (19%) and writing (15%)
- a quarter (27%) of workers in the South West believe they need some training in basic skills, with a higher than average proportion mentioning reading (14%) and Maths (16%)
- while no more likely than average overall, workers in London are more likely than average to mention a need for training in speaking English (16%), reading (14%) and writing (13%)

Table 34: Self-assessed need for training in basic skills by region

Row percentages	ANY %	Reading %	Writing %	Speaking English %	Maths %	Digital skills %
Total (3,611)	20	10	8	9	8	2
East Midlands (300)	10	6	5	7	2	0
East of England (300)	4	1	1	3	<0.5	0
London (302)	22	**14**	**13**	**16**	9	1
North East (301)	<0.5	<0.5	<0.5	<0.5	<0.5	<0.5
North West (300)	12	7	4	4	4	1
South East (300)	**40**	**20**	**19**	**19**	**12**	3
South West (302)	**27**	**14**	11	10	**16**	2
West Midlands (300)	16	6	5	7	3	1
Yorkshire & Humber (304)	24	11	8	11	9	<0.5
Northern Ireland (300)	**31**	11	**15**	12	**19**	**19**
Scotland (300)	20	8	6	7	9	0
Wales (302)	22	9	9	8	9	2

Q37. Construction jobs need workers to read instructions and record information more than they used to. Would any training in any of the following help you with your work?
Unweighted bases: all respondents
Note: figures in bold are statistically higher than the average at the 95% confidence level

As was the case in 2022, some sub-groups of construction workers are more likely to believe they would benefit from some training in basic skills:

- workers from an ethnic minority group (33%) and White other workers (35%), compared with 15% of White British workers
- migrant workers (47%), across all skills, but in particular with speaking English (38%)

Current study for additional construction qualifications

Overall, around one in ten (9%) construction workers are currently working towards formal qualifications relevant to the construction industry, which is the lowest level reported since 2012 (13% in 2022, 15% in 2018/19, 12% in 2015 and 11% in 2012).

As in previous surveys, the likelihood that workers are currently working towards qualifications is significantly higher than average amongst the youngest workers (43% of 16 to 19 year olds and 18% of 20 to 24 year olds). However, it is among those aged 20 to 44 that the greatest declines have been seen: 18% of 20 to 24 year olds are currently working towards qualifications as compared to 24% in 2022, and 7% of 25 to 44 year olds are doing so, as compared to 11% in 2022.

This pattern is (unsurprisingly) replicated by length of time in the industry. Those who have been in the industry for up to 5 years are more likely than those who have been in the industry for longer to be working towards a qualification (29% of those in the industry for up to a year, 19%% of those in it for 1 to 2 years and 12% of those in it for 2 to 5 years, as compared to 6% of those in the industry for longer). The greatest reductions have been seen among those in the industry for 1 to 2 years (from 27% in 2022 to 19% in 2025) and those who have been in it for 2 to 5 years (from 20% to 12%). Unlike previous years, there are no significant differences by type of contract.

Table 35: Proportion working towards additional construction qualifications over time

Row percentages		2025 %	2022 %	2018/19 %	2015 %
Total	UK (3,611)	9	13	15	12
Age	16 to 19 years (185)	**43**	43	55	57
	20 to 24 years (393)	**18**	24	24	23
	25 to 44 years (1,904)	7	11	14	10
	45+ years (1,091)	4	5	6	4
Length of time in construction	<1 year (239)	**29**	28	38	31
	1 to 2 years (232)	**19**	27	31	28
	2 to 5 years (565)	**12**	20	25	23
	5+ years (2,566)	6	8	9	7
Contract type	Employed directly (2,221)	9	15	20	16
	Self- employed (1,159)	9	10	9	8
	Agency (210)	6	8	11	10

Q18. Are you currently working towards any formal qualifications relevant to the construction industry?
Unweighted bases for 2025 in parentheses: all respondents
Note: Figures in bold are statistically higher than the average at the 95% confidence level

Variations are also evident by current job role, with electricians (21%), bricklayers (17%) and site managers (12%) more likely than average and labourers/general operatives (3%) less likely than average to be currently working towards qualifications.

Of those who are currently studying for a qualification (and who provided a response) the most frequent type of qualification is an NVQ/SVQ (57%). In terms of the subject of the qualifications being worked towards, construction/project/site management and bricklaying/brickwork (both 17%), followed by electrical installation/engineering (15%) and carpentry/joinery (8%) are most frequent.

Supervisory and managerial qualifications and training

Approaching three in ten (28%) construction workers perform a supervisory or management role at their site.

Amongst those who do not currently perform supervisory/management roles and have not had this role before, 15% want to become a supervisor or manager in the future, continuing the decline since 2018/19, where 24% wanted to. A further 5% have had a supervisory/managerial role previously and want to return to that status.

One in eight (12%) construction workers not currently managers/supervisors are unsure as to whether they would like to be one in the future, fewer than reported in 2022 (18%).

Two in three (68%) construction workers surveyed do not want to be a manager or supervisor, which is a significant uplift on the 59% who felt this way in 2022, and it continues an upward trend on this measure. For the first time this year, this measure was split by whether workers had or had not previously performed supervisory/management roles. On this basis, 56% had not done so before, and 12% had done so.

By age, those aged 16 to 24 are most likely to want to be supervisors/managers – 32% of those aged 16 to 19 and 28% of those aged 20 to 24 – while 80% of those aged 45 or over do not wish to.

Workers from an ethnic minority group are significantly more likely than White workers to want to be supervisors/managers, whether they have been in such positions before or not (31% compared to 19%), and this is not because they have a younger profile than White workers (15% of White workers are aged 16 to 24, as compared to 13% of those from an ethnic minority).

Agency (29%) and self-employed workers (20%) are more likely to want to be supervisors/managers than those employed directly (10%).

Three quarters (78%) of those with no qualifications do not want to become a supervisor or manager, while those with Level 1 and Level 4 qualifications are most likely to want to do so (39% and 40% respectively).

Table 36: Whether workers want to be supervisors/managers in the future

Row percentages		Yes, not done before %	Yes and done before %	No, not done before %	No and done before %	Maybe/ depends %
2025 Total (2,530)		15	5	56	12	12
Age	16 to 19 years (175)	**32**	0	38	4	**26**
	20 to 24 years (328)	**28**	2	45	5	**20**
	25 to 44 years (1,368)	15	5	**60**	9	10
	45+ years (639)	5	**7**	56	**24**	7
Ethnicity	White (2,229)	14	5	**57**	**13**	12
	Ethnic minority (270)	**26**	5	51	7	11
Length of time in construction	<1 year (220)	**28**	4	39	5	**24**
	1 to 2 years (208)	**35**	1	48	3	13
	2 to 5 years (495)	**20**	3	**60**	5	13
	5+ years (1,603)	10	6	**57**	**17**	10
Contract type	Employed directly (1,488)	10	5	**63**	13	10
	Self-employed (845)	**20**	5	48	11	**15**
	Agency (181)	**29**	5	40	13	12
Highest qualification level	No qualifications (1,418)	10	3	**68**	10	10
	Level 1 (147)	**34**	5	39	11	11
	Level 2 (559)	**19**	5	47	**16**	13
	Level 3 (211)	**21**	**11**	38	13	**18**
	Level 4+ (125)	**22**	**18**	20	**25**	16

Q9. Do you want to become a supervisor or manager within construction in the future?
Unweighted bases for 2025 in parentheses: where do not perform supervisor/management roles on site
Note: figures in bold are statistically higher than the average at the 95% confidence level

Three in ten construction workers surveyed (31% compared to 33% in 2022, 34% in 2018/19 and 25% in 2015) and four in five of those who have or have had some form of supervisory or management responsibilities (83% compared to 80% in 2022, 81% in 2018/19, 73% in 2015 and 71% in 2012) have received formal training designed to improve managerial or supervisory knowledge or skills.

The proportion that has undertaken any managerial or supervisory training increases to just over two in five construction workers aged 45 and over (42%, compared to 41% in 2022). Most site managers have received formal training designed to improve managerial or supervisory knowledge or skills (93%).

In terms of the types of supervisory/managerial training undertaken, SMSTS (Site Manager Safety Training Scheme) continues to be the most frequently mentioned by those who have undertaken any training (63%), and to a greater extent than was the case in 2022 (43%).

Site Safety Supervisors Courses (32%) and in-house training (25%) are the next most common types of training, in line with 2022 (31% and 24% respectively), and with previous iterations of the survey.

Table 37: Types of managerial/supervisory training undertaken over time

	2025 %	2022 %
SMSTS	63	43
Site Safety Supervisors Course	32	31
In-house training	25	24
NVQ Level 6 / SCQF Level 10 Construction site management	16	9
NVQ Level 3 / SCQF 6 Occupational Work Supervision	11	10
NVQ Level 4/ SCQF Level 7 Construction Site supervision	11	4
Project Management short courses	8	5
IOSH	6	6
NVQ Level 7 / SCQF Level 11 Construction Senior Management	5	Na
CIOB Site Supervisor	4	5
Managing Safety in the Construction Industry (for CSRs)	4	6
Supervisory Management Training and Development	4	4
CIOB Site Management Education and Training Scheme	2	6
Assessor and Verifier Training	1	6
Chargehand and Team Leader Training	1	5
Safety for Senior Executives (for CSR)	1	2
Other	7	6
Unweighted bases	1,059	974

Q11. Which of the following training to improve your managerial or supervisory knowledge or skills have you received?
Unweighted bases: where received formal training designed to improve managerial or supervisory knowledge or skills

Overall skill levels

An overview of the qualification and skill levels of construction workers surveyed has been derived by combining data from various separate measures and is presented in table 38 below.

Due to changes in the way the qualification information has been collected in 2025 we have not included comparisons with previous iterations of the survey.

The vast majority of construction workers (96%) have a construction-related qualification and/or skills card/certificate (or were working towards a qualification at the point of interview): only 3% of those interviewed could not say that they were at least working towards obtaining a CSCS card (or similar) or construction qualification.

A third of the workforce (36%) holds a skill card/certificate but have no other construction qualification. One in ten (9%) are working towards a qualification.

Table 38: Qualification status summary

	2025 %
Holds a formal construction qualification or a skills card/certificate or working towards a qualification	96
Holds a formal construction qualification or a skills card/certificate	96
Holds a skills card/certificate	93
Holds a skills card/certification but no other qualification	36
Working towards a qualification	9
None of the above	3
Unweighted bases	3,611

All qualification questions
Unweighted bases: all respondents

Based on all questions relating to qualifications it is possible to calculate each worker's highest qualification level, and table 39 summarises construction workers' highest level of qualification, overall and by occupation.

Overall, close to half (46%) have qualifications equivalent to Level 2 or above.

By occupation, site managers and those in technical trades are most likely to hold the highest level of qualifications, with 61% and 54% respectively holding Level 4 or higher.

As well as these two occupations, plumbers (66%), electricians (69%), bricklayers (56%), and carpenters/joiners (56%) are more likely than average (46%) to have qualifications equivalent to Level 2 or above.

Table 39: Current qualification level by occupation

Row percentages	**No formal quals %**	**Level 1 %**	**Level 2 %**	**Level 3 %**	**Level 4+ %**	**Other %**
Total (3,611)	44	6	20	10	16	3
Site manager (444)	15	2	7	12	**61**	4
Technical (110)	23	1	12	6	**54**	4
Plumber (117)	24	6	**40**	13	13	4
Electrician (185)	27	1	17	**46**	6	3
Bricklayer (257)	35	8	**39**	11	6	2
Carpenter/joiner (247)	37	5	**33**	**15**	8	2
Plant/machine operative (257)	39	8	**37**	7	6	3
Scaffolder (109)	43	6	26	15	6	4
Dryliner (96)	50	6	**35**	5	3	<0.5
Plasterer (62)	51	1	**34**	11	4	0
Bankssperson (57)	51	9	16	7	9	8
Roofer (79)	53	6	29	10	2	0
Other (108)	**59**	6	16	7	11	1
Painter/decorator (91)	**61**	5	21	4	7	2
Labourer/general operative (1,048)	**69**	9	12	4	3	4

Q37. Construction jobs need workers to read instructions and record information more than they used to. Would any training in any of the following help you with your work?
Unweighted bases: all respondents
Note: figures in bold are statistically higher than the average at the 95% confidence level

Geographic mobility

Overview

This section of the report on geographic mobility helps to identify which regions/nations of the UK are net ‘importers’ or ‘exporters’ of construction workers, as well as which elements of the construction workforce are the most mobile (based on region/nation of residence, region/nation of birth and type of contract). The measures included in this section are:

- reasons for working in current location
- comparisons of current location with workers’ region/nation of origin
- proportion of construction workers’ career that has been spent working in the current region/nation
- whether workers commute daily to their current site or whether temporary accommodation is used
- miles travelled to site each day
- whether their next site will be in commuting distance or will require temporary accommodation

Work history in the current region/nation

All workers were asked what made them decide to work in the region/nation that they are currently working in.

As has been the case since 2018/19, around half (51%) report that their employer sent them here.

There has been a marked reduction in the proportion who say they grew up in this location/have always lived there, from 46% in 2022 to 22% in the latest survey, and this is largely as a result of an increase in the proportion saying it is for family reasons, from 5% in 2022 to 19% in the latest survey.

There have also been increases, although much less marked, in the proportions saying there are more jobs available in the area (from 3% to 7%), and in mentions of better pay (from 4% to 6%).

Table 40: Reasons for choosing to work in current location over time – prompted, multiple response

	2025 %	2022 %	2018/19 %	2015 %
Employer sent you here	51	47	51	36
You grew up here/have always lived here	22	46	43	55
Family reasons	19	5	5	6
There are more jobs available in this area	7	3	5	6
Construction work is better paid in this area	6	4	3	3
Came to the area to take up this or another job	5	5	3	5
Wanted to move to the area because you like it or feel it offers opportunities for better quality of life	3	1	2	1
Better promotional prospects in this area	2	1	1	1
Unweighted bases	3,611	3,005	4,048	4,771

Q28. What made you decide to come and work in this area?
Unweighted bases: all respondents

As has been the case in previous surveys, there are significant differences by region/nation in the main reasons for working in their current location.

Having grown up there is mentioned at higher levels than average by workers in Northern Ireland (67%), the South West (46%), Wales (45%), Yorkshire and the Humber (37%) and Scotland (32%).

Being sent there by their employer is mentioned at higher levels than average by workers in the North East (100%), the East Midlands (82%), London (70%) and the East of England (64%).

Other notable differences by region/nation include:

- 85% of workers in Northern Ireland and 43% of workers in the West Midlands mention family reasons
- in Northern Ireland 24% of workers say there are more jobs available and 17% that construction work is better paid

Table 41: Top five reasons for deciding to work in their current region/nation by region/nation

Row percentages	Grew up here %	Employer sent you here %	Family reasons %	More jobs available %	Work is better paid %
Total (3,622)	22	51	19	7	6
East Midlands (300)	5	**82**	12	1	2
East of England (300)	4	**64**	**23**	4	3
London (302)	7	**70**	9	7	**11**
North East (301)	7	**100**	0	0	<0.5
North West (300)	23	53	17	6	5
South East (300)	20	47	17	**10**	8
South West (302)	**46**	23	**24**	6	5
West Midlands (300)	15	32	**43**	8	5
Yorkshire & Humber (304)	**37**	31	10	**12**	9
Northern Ireland (300)	**67**	16	**85**	**24**	**17**
Scotland (300)	**32**	49	7	3	**10**
Wales (302)	**45**	42	17	7	5

Q28. What made you decide to come and work in this area?
Unweighted bases: all respondents
Note: figures in bold are statistically higher than the average at the 95% confidence level

While the proportion of workers who have worked within their current region for their entire career has reduced, from 49% in 2022 to 41% in the latest survey, there has been a corresponding increase in the proportion who report working in their current region most of the time, from 34% in 2022 to 41% in the latest survey.

This means that the proportion of workers who have worked in their current region for all or most of their career has remained stable at 81% (compared to 83% in 2022), following an increase over 2018/19 (77%).

Table 42: Proportion of construction workers' career worked in current region/nation over time

	2025 %	2022 %	2018/19 %	2015 %
All of your time	41	49	44	44
Most of it	41	34	33	36
Around half your time	9	8	9	8
A small proportion of your time	4	5	10	7
Only on this job (this is the first site you've been to in this region/nation)	1	1	2	3
Don't know	3	3	1	2
Unweighted bases	3,611	3,005	4,048	4,771

Q26/Q27. Since working in construction in the UK, how much time have you spent on sites in this region/nation?
Unweighted bases: all respondents

Unsurprisingly the proportion of workers who have spent their whole career in the current region/nation reduces with age, from 55% of those aged 16 to 24 to 39% of those aged 25 or over. However, this continues a downward trend for 16 to 24 year olds, among whom 60% had worked in their current region for the whole of their career in 2022, as compared to 81% in 2018/19.

It also continues to be higher among White workers (42%) than workers from an ethnic minority group (35%).

There are also some quite significant variations again by region/nation, with those based in Northern Ireland (78%), Scotland (58%), Wales (54%), the South West (53%) and the West Midlands (51%) more likely than average to say they have spent all their career in this current region/nation.

Table 43: Proportion of workers who have spent all their time in their current region/nation by current region/nation over time

Row percentages	2025 %	2022 %	2018/19 %
Total (3,622)	41	49	44
East Midlands (300)	19	49	43
East of England (300)	35	50	27
London (302)	34	43	43
North East (301)	22	38	48
North West (300)	41	46	55
South East (300)	30	47	32
South West (302)	**53**	50	43
West Midlands (300)	**51**	45	36
Yorkshire & Humber (304)	42	37	42
Northern Ireland (300)	**78**	38	57
Scotland (300)	**58**	76	76
Wales (302)	**54**	61	60

Q26/Q27. Since working in construction in the UK, how much time have you spent on sites in this region/nation?
Unweighted bases for 2025 in parentheses: all respondents
Note: figures in bold are statistically higher than the average at the 95% confidence level

In terms of the regions/nations in which workers' current employers operate, those in Northern Ireland (88%), Scotland (77%) and the South West (61%) are more likely than average to have employers who operate in this region/nation only, and those in the North East (15%) and the East Midlands (26%) less likely.

Having employers who operate in other regions/nations is more prevalent among workers in Northern Ireland (80%), in the South East (35%, including 21% whose employer operates in London) and Yorkshire and the Humber (31%).

Workers in the North East (90%) and the East Midlands (77%) are more likely than average to have employers who operate nationally, and those in Northern Ireland (20%), Scotland (37%) and the South West (39%) are less likely to do so.

Workers in Northern Ireland are also more likely to report that their current employer works in other parts of Europe (30%, as compared to 2% for the UK as a whole) presumably reflecting employment in businesses which operate both in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland.

Table 44: Area of employer operations by region/nation working in currently

Row percentages	Same region/nation %	Other region/nation %	Nationally %	Other parts of Europe %	Outside of Europe %	Other / Unsure %
Total (3,611)	Na	Na	56	2	<0.5	2
East Midlands (300)	26	11	**77**	0	0	0
East of England (300)	36	14	60	1	0	<0.5
London (302)	49	11	60	2	1	1
North East (301)	15	10	**90**	0	0	0
North West (300)	48	13	57	1	**1**	<0.5
South East (300)	39	**35**	56	1	0	6
South West (302)	**61**	13	39	1	<0.5	2
West Midlands (300)	50	13	55	1	1	2
Yorkshire & Humber (304)	37	**31**	65	1	0	2
Northern Ireland (300)	**88**	**90**	20	**30**	1	2
Scotland (300)	**77**	12	37	2	1	<0.5
Wales (302)	50	14	57	1	<0.5	0

Q25. Where does your employer operate, that is, take on construction contracts?
Unweighted bases in parentheses: all respondents
Note: figures in bold are statistically higher than the average at the 95% confidence level

Region/nation worked in before current site

Thinking about the last construction site they worked on before their current one, in most cases, workers' last sites are in the same region/nation as they are working in now. However, the extent to which this is the case varies considerably by region/nation, as table 45 illustrates. Table 45 also shows the main other regions/nations in which they worked prior to their current role.

Workers in the North East (98%), Scotland (95%), London (88%) and Northern Ireland (88%) are more likely than those in other regions to report their last site was in the same nation/region as they are working in now.

Those in the South East are less likely to report this is the case (64%), with 24% previously having worked in London, as are those in the East Midlands (65%), where 21% had previously worked in the West Midlands, and those in Yorkshire and the Humber (68%), where 9% had previously worked in the North West and 8% had previously worked in the East Midlands.

Table 45: Region/nation currently working in by region/nation of workers' immediately previous construction sites

Row percentages	**Same region/nation %**	**Main other region/nation %**
East Midlands (297)	65	West Midlands (21%)
East of England (297)	79	London (11%)
London (287)	88	South East (6%)
North East (300)	98	
North West (280)	85	Yorkshire and the Humber (5%)
South East (284)	64	London (24%)
South West (277)	84	South East and West Midlands (both 5%)
West Midlands (282)	77	East Midlands (13%)
Yorkshire & Humber (274)	68	North West (9%) and East Midlands (8%)
Northern Ireland (291)	88	Republic of Ireland (10%)
Scotland (276)	95	
Wales (286)	77	North West (10%) and West Midlands (5%)

Q32. Now thinking about the last construction site, you worked on before this one. In which region or nation was the site located?
Unweighted bases in parentheses: where had previous job

Worker origins

Workers were asked which region/nation they were living in just before they got their first job in construction in the UK. Overall, three quarters of all construction workers were interviewed in the same region/nation in which they were living when they started their construction career (75% compared to 74% in 2022, 72% in 2018/19 and 75% in 2015). There are, however, considerable variations in the extent to which workers have remained in their original locality, as shown in table 46.

As was the case in 2022, nine in ten or more workers currently based in the North East (98%), Scotland (94%) and Northern Ireland (95%) have remained in the same region/nation in which they were based when they started their construction careers. This is also true for close to nine in ten of those in the North West (87%).

The proportion for whom this is the case is lowest in the South East (50%), where 42% first started working in another region/nation, including 28% who started in London, Yorkshire and the Humber (65%), where 31% first started working in another region/nation, and the East Midlands (66%), where 30% first started working in another region/nation, including 22% who started in the West Midlands.

Table 46: Region/nation currently working in by workers' region/nation of residence prior to first starting work in construction

Row percentages	Same region/nation %	Other region/nation %	Other parts of Europe %	Outside of Europe %	Other / Unsure %
Total (3,611)	Na	Na	2	1	1
East Midlands (300)	66	**30**	**5**	0	0
East of England (300)	79	20	0	0	1
London (302)	82	13	2	1	1
North East (301)	**98**	1	0	0	1
North West (300)	**87**	11	1	<0.5	1
South East (300)	50	**42**	**6**	2	1
South West (302)	72	23	2	2	1
West Midlands (300)	78	18	1	<0.5	3
Yorkshire & Humber (304)	65	**31**	2	<0.5	1
Northern Ireland (300)	**92**	5	3	<0.5	<0.5
Scotland (300)	**94**	5	1	1	<0.5
Wales (302)	75	23	1	1	0

Q40. Where were you living just before you got your first job in construction in the UK?
Unweighted bases in parentheses: all respondents
Note: figures in bold are statistically higher than the average at the 95% confidence level

Travel to site

Location of current workplace in relation to the location of workers' current homes

The majority of construction workers who provided sufficient information to identify the location of their current home were interviewed on a site that was located within the same region/nation as their permanent home, but there is some variation as to whether this was the case by region/nation.

All workers in Northern Ireland and almost all workers in Scotland (99%) and the North East (97%) were interviewed on a site that was located within the same region/nation as their permanent home.

By contrast, the following regions are more likely to import workers from other regions, most commonly neighbouring regions:

- East Midlands (44% overall, including 39% from neighbouring regions)
- East Of England (42% overall, including 37% from neighbouring regions)
- South East (40% overall, including 28% from neighbouring regions)
- London (29% overall, including 24% from neighbouring regions)

South East is the only region that is a significant importer of labour from other regions further afield – 11% come from a region that is further afield.

A detailed breakdown of workers' home regions/nations in relation to where their current work site is located is provided below in table 47, while a breakdown of workers' current address in relation to where they work is provided in table 48.

Table 47: Inter-regional/national movement from permanent residence to current site

Region/nation currently working in Row percentages	2025			2022			2018/19		
	% from same region/ nation	% from neigh-bouring region/ nation	% from region/ nation further afield	% from same region/ nation	% from neigh-bouring region/ nation	% from region/ nation further afield	% from same region/ nation	% from neigh-bouring region/ nation	% from region/ nation further afield
East Midlands (197)	56	39	6	76	22	2	90	10	0
East of England (197)	58	37	5	71	25	4	60	36	4
London (150)	71	24	5	72	27	1	63	32	5
North East (123)	97	2	1	81	5	4	96	4	0
North West (194)	89	10	2	88	10	2	94	6	0
South East (215)	60	28	11	76	9	15	55	42	3
South West (123)	86	11	3	92	7	1	94	6	0
West Midlands (219)	86	11	3	87	9	4	80	19	1
Yorkshire and the Humber (166)	80	15	5	87	10	3	88	9	3
Northern Ireland (298)	100	0	0	100	0	0	100	0	0
Scotland (180)	99	0	1	100	0	0	100	0	0
Wales (173)	86	13	1	93	4	3	98	2	0

Q53. Could you please tell me the postcode, or street and town of your permanent home? Q54.How many miles would you estimate it is from your permanent residence to site
Unweighted bases for 2025 in parentheses: all respondents (valid responses)

Table 48: Region/nation of current site by region/nation of current residence

Current residence	Region/nation currently working in											
	EM %	EE %	LON %	NE %	NW %	SE %	SW %	WM %	Y&H %	NI %	SC%	WA %
East Midlands	58	16	1	0	1	6	0	10	10	0	0	1
East of England	1	59	12	0	0	4	0	0	1	0	0	0
London	1	13	72	0	0	20	1	0	0	0	0	0
North East	0	0	0	97	2	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
North West	0	1	1	1	89	1	0	0	3	0	0	7
South East	3	9	12	0	0	65	5	<0.5	1	0	0	0
South West	1	0	0	0	0	3	87	1	0	0	0	0
West Midlands	36	2	2	0	4	2	6	86	2	0	0	7
Yorkshire & Humber	2	1	0	2	3	0	0	2	82	0	1	0
Northern Ireland	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	<0.5	0	100	0	0
Scotland	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	99	0
Wales	0	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	0	86
Unweighted bases	194	191	138	123	188	200	117	211	153	298	174	167

Q55. Could you please tell me the postcode, or street and town of where you are staying at nights while working at this site? Q56. How many miles would you estimate it is from where you are staying at nights to the site? (valid responses)

Furthest distance worked in last 12 months

All workers were asked to indicate the furthest distance they have worked from their permanent or current home in the last 12 months. A third (34%) of all construction workers have worked no more than 20 miles away, in line with 2022 (33%), and a higher proportion than was the case previously (26% in 2018/19 and 20% in 2015).

A further third (35%) have worked between 21 and 50 miles away, in line with previous years (33% in 2022, 32% in 2018/19 and 31% in 2015).

This leaves just over a quarter (28%) who have worked more than 50 miles away from their permanent or current home, fewer than in 2022 (32%), 2018/19 (41%) and 2015 (47%). Within this, one in six (18%) have worked between 50 and 100 miles (compared to 20% in 2022, 24% in 2018/19 and 26% in 2015), and one in ten (10%) more than 100 miles (compared to 12% in 2022, 17% in 2018/19 and 21% in 2015).

Once again there are variations in this regard, with workers based in Yorkshire and Humber (17%), the West Midlands (16%), Northern Ireland and Wales (both 15%) most likely to have travelled more than 100 miles from their permanent home to work in the last 12 months.

Table 49: Proportion of workers that have travelled more than 100 miles from their permanent home to work in the last 12 months by region/nation over time

Row percentages	**2025 %**	**2022 %**	**2018/19 %**
Total (3,611)	10	12	17
East Midlands (300)	9	13	12
East of England (300)	7	8	15
London (302)	3	6	13
North East (301)	1	17	18
North West (300)	9	10	14
South East (300)	13	9	17
South West (302)	9	14	18
West Midlands (300)	**16**	12	17
Yorkshire & Humber (304)	**17**	25	28
Northern Ireland (300)	**15**	21	14
Scotland (300)	8	14	28
Wales (302)	**15**	12	11

Q29. In the last 12 months, what is the furthest distance you have worked from your permanent home address?
Unweighted bases for 2025 in parentheses: all respondents
Note: figures in bold for 2025 are statistically higher than the average at the 95% confidence level

Journey distance to work

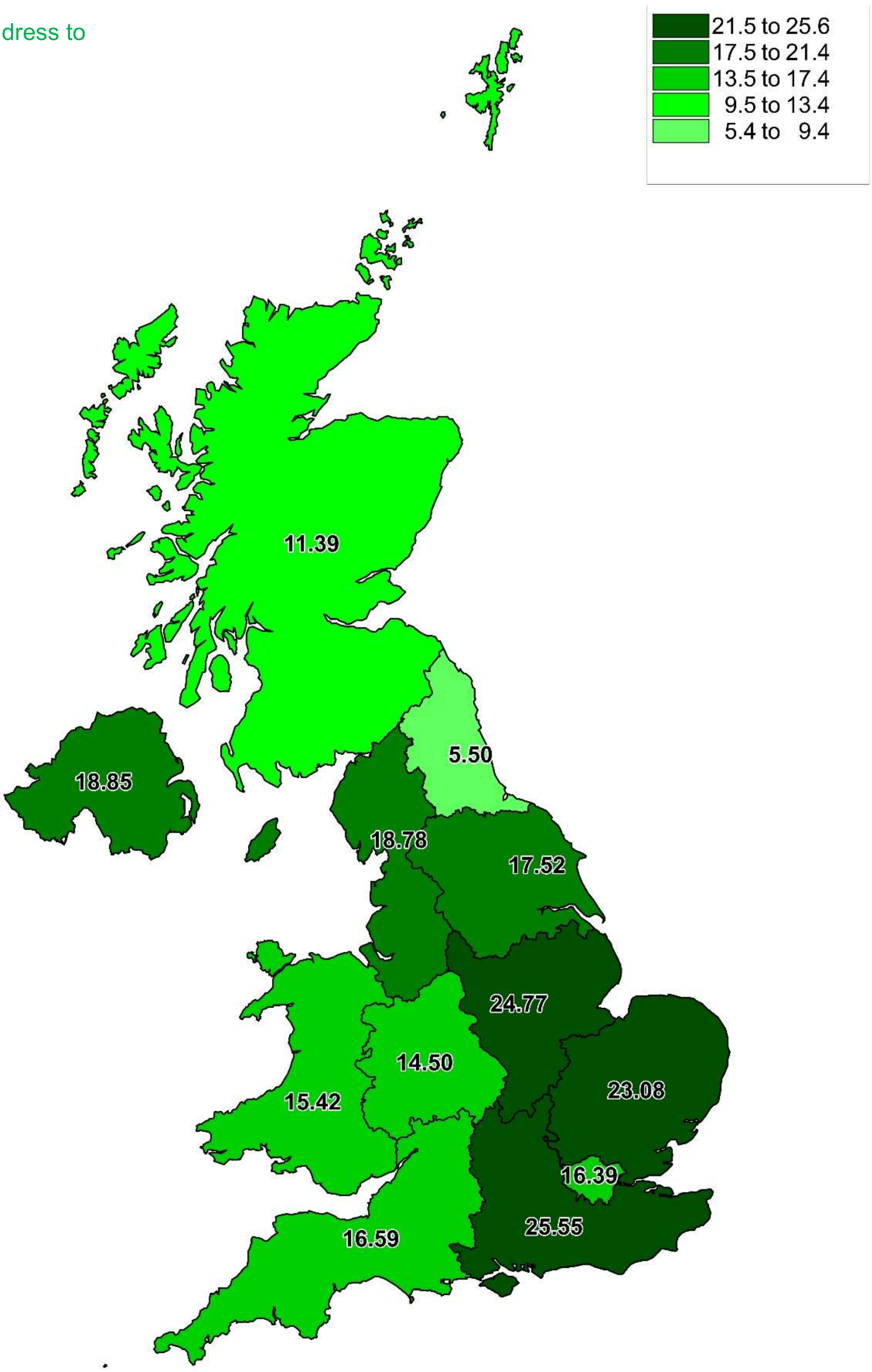
The average (mean) distance from workers’ current residence (taking into account temporary residences) to their current site is 20 miles, somewhat reversing the downward trend that has been seen since the survey began (16 miles in 2022, 18 miles in 2018/19, 22 miles in 2015 and 28 miles in 2012).

Based on those workers that provided an estimate, a third (34%) travel less than 10 miles from their current residence to the site where they work, down on the 45% who did so in 2022, close to three in ten (28%) travel 10 to 19 miles, in line with 2022 (28%), and three in ten (30%) travel 20 to 49 miles, down on the 25% reported in 2022.

The proportion travelling between 50 and 99 miles has increased from 2% in 2022 to 7% in the latest survey. As has been the case previously, very few (1%) are travelling further than this.

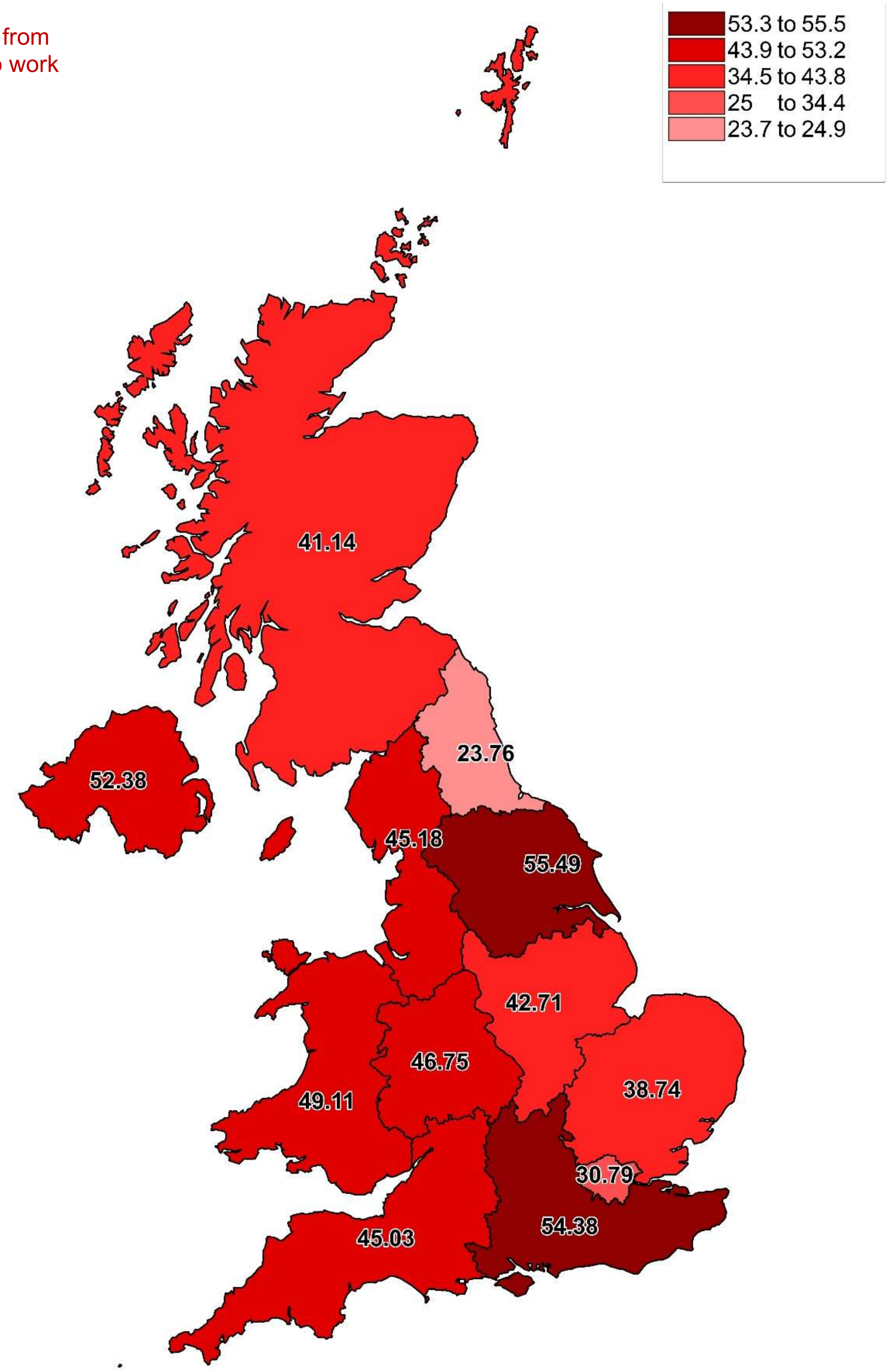
The average distance travelled is higher than average in the South East (24 miles) and lower than average in the North East (13 miles) and Scotland (16 miles).

Average distance travelled from permanent address to work site



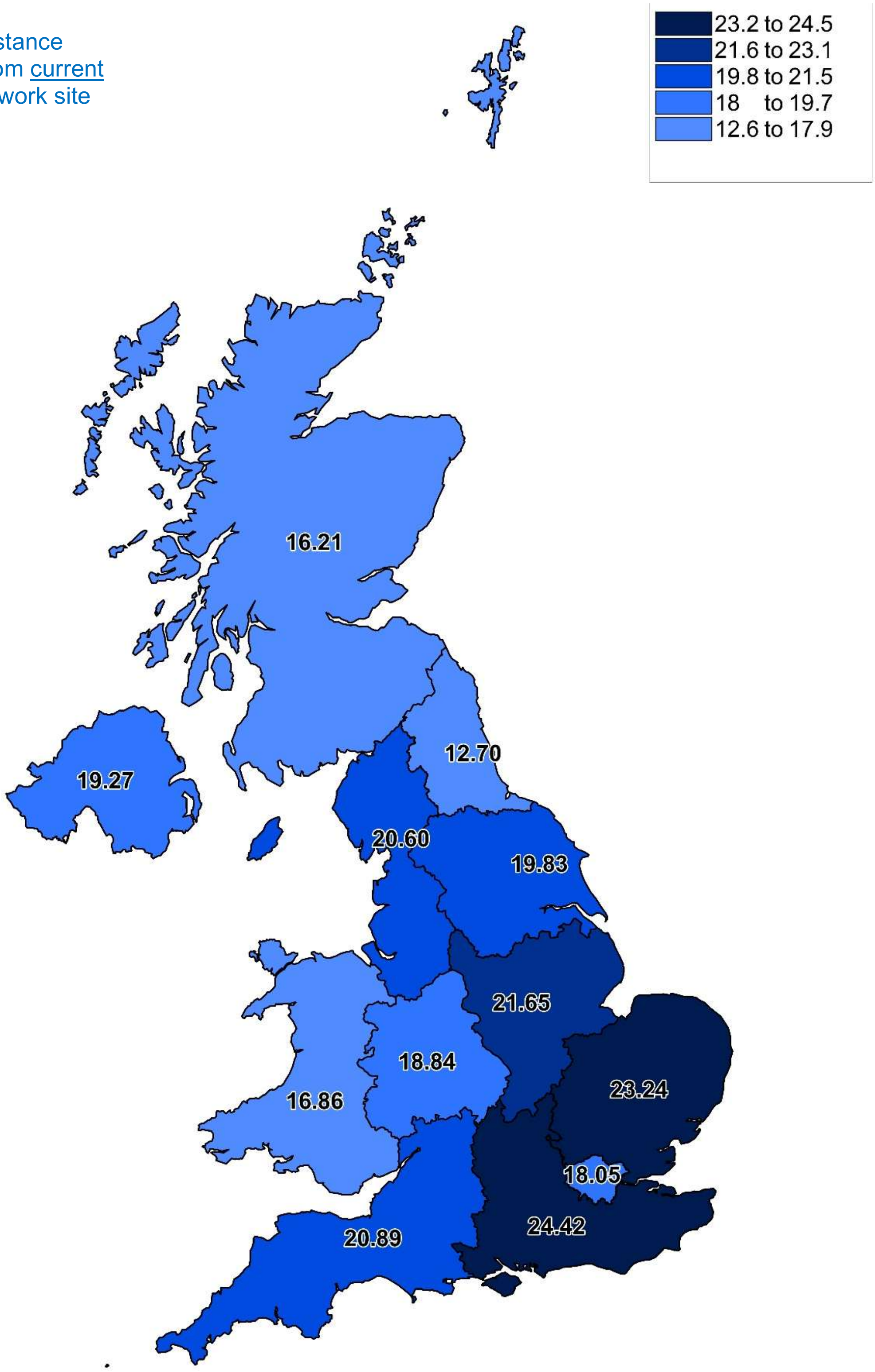
Average distance travelled overall = 21 miles
Median distance overall = 15 miles

<u>Furthest</u> average distance travelled from current address to work site



Average furthest distance travelled overall = 44 miles
Median distance overall = 36 miles

Average distance travelled from current address to work site



Average distance travelled overall = 20 miles
Median distance overall = 15 miles

Use of temporary accommodation

Nationally, one in twenty (5%) construction workers report that they are currently staying in temporary accommodation while working at their site, in line with previous years (5% in 2022 and 2018/19, and 6% in 2015 and 2012). The proportion is highest amongst workers currently based in the South East (11%), Yorkshire and the Humber (9%) and the West Midlands (8%).

Construction workers from White British backgrounds are less likely than those from White Other or ethnic minority groups to report being in temporary accommodation (3% compared to 9% and 9% respectively).

Those in construction for less than a year are more likely than those in the industry for longer to report being in temporary accommodation (13% compared to 5%), as are those who are self-employed (7%), and agency workers (12%) as compared to those employed directly (3%).

Table 50: Percentage of workers in temporary accommodation over time

	2025 %	2022 %	2018/19 %	2015 %
Total (3,611)	5	5	5	6
East Midlands (300)	3	10	10	8
East of England (300)	1	7	7	6
London (302)	6	7	3	4
North East (301)	<0.5	6	6	3
North West (300)	3	6	3	5
South East (300)	**11**	6	2	7
South West (302)	6	4	5	11
West Midlands (300)	**8**	3	3	7
Yorkshire & Humber (304)	**9**	3	3	2
Northern Ireland (300)	1	3	3	4
Scotland (300)	3	2	1	4
Wales (302)	3	1	3	3

Q41. Do you consider where you live now while working at this site to be your permanent address or are you staying in temporary accommodation at the moment?
Unweighted bases for 2025 in parentheses: all respondents
Note: figures in bold for 2025 are statistically higher than the average at the 95% confidence level

Site duration and change

Expected site/phase duration

Expected site/phase duration

All workers who are currently employed on a temporary basis (29% of all construction workers) were asked how much longer they expect to be working for the company/person/agency paying them.

Responses range from 10% that expect to work for another week or two or less, 9% expecting another 2 to 4 weeks, 15% between 1 and 3 months, 14% between 3 and 6 months, 20% between 6 months and a year, and 8% that expect to still be working for them for at least another year.

In a quarter (25%) of cases temporary workers do not know how much longer they could expect to be working for their current company, continuing a decline on this measure since 2018/19 (38%, and 32% in 2022).

To get a measure of workplace stability amongst all construction workers, all respondents, whether temporary or permanent, were asked to indicate how long in total they expect to work at that specific site during this phase.

One in five (20%) do not expect to work on that site for more than a month, which is the highest level recorded since 2012 (12% in 2022, 14% in 2018/19 and 12% in 2015 and 2012).

Over half (56%) of all workers anticipate being on site for more than a month but less than a year, continuing an upward trend on this measure (53% in 2022 and 51% in 2018/19).

One in ten (11%) of all workers expect to stay on that site for a year or longer, down on the 13% who did so in 2022, the 18% who did so in 2018/19, and the 26% who did so in 2015.

At 13%, the proportion of workers unsure how long they will be working at that site has reduced to its lowest level since 2012 (22% in 2022, 16% in 2018/19, 24% in 2015 and 20% in 2012).

By region/nation, workers in the North East (20%) are most likely to be unsure of how much longer they will be working at that site, while workers in Northern Ireland (7%) and the East of England (9%) are least likely to be unsure.

Workers from an ethnic minority background are more likely than White workers are to be unsure how long they will be at that site (18% compared to 12%).

Amongst the various trades/job roles, site managers and technical staff continue to be significantly more likely to indicate that they expect to work at that site for more than a year (both 27%).

Table 51: Length of time workers expect to work at that specific site during current phase over time

	2025 %	2022 %	2018/19 %	2015 %
Less than a week	4	2	4	4
1-2 weeks	5	3	4	2*
2-3 weeks	5	3	3	3*
3-4 weeks	6	4	3	3*
1-3 months	14	11	12	38
3-6 months	19	17	16	
6-12 months	23	25	23	
More than a year	11	13	18	26
Don't know	13	22	16	24
Unweighted bases	3,611	3,005	4,048	4,771

Q24. How long IN TOTAL do you expect to work at this specific site during this phase?
Unweighted bases: all respondents
Note: *wording is different; 'about a week'/'about 2 weeks'/'about 3 weeks'

Expected next site location

Two thirds (65%) of all workers believe that when they finish this job they will get a job that allows them to travel from their permanent home to work on a daily basis. While this continues to be a majority, it is lower than the 69% who believed this to be the case in 2022, which was also a decline on 2018/19 (84%).

However, the proportion who are sure that this will not be the case has remained stable (6% compared to 5% in 2022 and 4% in 2018/19), as has the proportion who believe it depends where the work is (23% compared to 20% in 2022, which was a significant uplift on 2018/19 (8%).

By region/nation the belief that they will be able to commute daily from their permanent home to their next job is higher than average in the North East (95%), Northern Ireland (82%), Scotland (74%) and the South West (73%), and lower than average in the South East (48%).

Confidence in this respect increases with age, from 58% of those aged 16 to 24 to 71% of those aged 45 or over.

Sub-sector and sector mobility

Overview

This final section of the report explores sub-sector mobility (movement between project types within the construction sector) and how this varies between different groups of construction workers. Attitudes towards future employment in the sector are also examined.

Sub-sector mobility

All workers were asked which (if any) of six types of construction work they have undertaken for a continuous period of at least 3 months.

New housing continues to be the most common type of construction work undertaken, by 73%, but to a lesser extent than has been seen previously (78% in 2022 and 79% in 2018/19), followed by housing repair and maintenance (42%, compared to 42% in 2022 and 46% in 2018/19).

At 45%, commercial work has recovered to an extent, following a dip in 2022 (39% compared to 51% in 2018/19).

Private industrial work (26%), public non-housing work (26%) and infrastructure building projects (15%) have all seen continued declines since 2022 (35%, 32% and 23% respectively), which also saw declines on 2018/19 (45%, 51% and 31% respectively), placing these at their lowest levels yet.

Included for the first time this year, 4% had worked in energy efficiency retrofitting, although this rises to 24% in Northern Ireland.

Reflecting these results, there has been a continued reduction in the proportion of workers who have worked on four or more types of construction, from 39% in 2018/19, to 24% in 2022, to 20% in the latest survey.

Table 52: Type of projects on which workers have spent significant periods of time over time

	2025 %	2022 %	2018/19 %	2015 %	2012 %
New housing	73	78	79	83	72
Commercial work	45	39	51	35	55
Housing repair and maintenance	42	42	46	36	47
Private industrial work	26	35	45	30	51
Public non-housing work	26	32	51	33	59
Infrastructure building projects	15	23	31	21	38
Energy efficiency retrofit	4	Na	Na	Na	Na
Off-site manufacturing	3	6	Na	Na	Na
ONE TYPE ONLY	40	42	30	48	24
TWO TYPES	20	17	16	14	17
THREE TYPES	19	13	14	11	15
FOUR TYPES	9	9	12	8	13
FIVE TYPES	6	9	13	9	15
SIX OR MORE TYPES	5	6	14	9	15
Unweighted bases	3,611	3,005	4,048	4,771	4,993

Q4. Which, if any, of the following types of construction work have you spent periods of at least 3 months at a time working in?
Unweighted bases: all respondents

The likelihood that workers have worked only on one project type declines as age increases, as one would expect (from 61% of 16 to 19 year olds to 35% of 45+ year olds).

The number of project types worked on varies significantly by region/nation. Regions/nations where workers are more likely than average to have worked on only one type of construction are the South West (68%) and the South East (46%), whereas workers in Northern Ireland (19%), the East of England (20%), the East Midlands (34%) and the North East (26%) are less likely than average to have done so.

There have been increases since 2022 in the proportion of workers who have worked on only one project type in the South West (from 47% to 68%), the South East (from 42% to 46%), Yorkshire and the Humber (from 33% to 42%), Scotland (from 27% to 40%) and Northern Ireland (from 12% to 19%).

Table 53: Proportion of workers that have only worked on one project type over time

	2025 %	2022 %	2018/19 %
Total (3,611)	40	42	30
East Midlands (300)	34	53	55
East of England (300)	20	45	24
London (302)	37	50	28
North East (301)	26	31	34
North West (300)	43	41	28
South East (300)	**46**	42	23
South West (302)	**68**	47	23
West Midlands (300)	36	46	46
Yorkshire & Humber (304)	42	33	37
Northern Ireland (300)	19	12	21
Scotland (300)	40	27	23
Wales (302)	40	50	29

Q4. Which, if any, of the following types of construction work have you spent periods of at least 3 months at a time working in?
Unweighted bases for 2025 in parentheses: all respondents
Note: figures in bold for 2025 are statistically higher than the average at the 95% confidence level

By current trade/occupation, bricklaying is the only occupation where workers are more likely than average to have worked in only one type of construction (51%).

By contrast, those in technical occupations (65%) and electricians (67%) are more likely than average to have worked in more than one type of construction.

Table 54: Number of sub-sectors worked in by occupation

Row percentages	1 type %	2 types %	3 types %	4 types %	5 types %	6+ types %
Banksperson (57)	50	17	13	8	7	3
Bricklayer (257)	**51**	14	12	11	8	2
Dryliner (96)	38	23	25	2	9	2
Labourer/general operative (1,048)	39	**27**	20	7	3	3
Roofer (79)	35	26	23	3	1	7
Scaffolder (109)	33	16	22	13	5	9
Plant/machine operative (257)	37	20	17	8	**11**	7
Plumber (117)	37	19	20	8	5	9
Technical (245)	33	16	22	**15**	5	7
Plasterer (62)	36	20	22	**2**	**8**	9
Electrician (185)	32	16	22	**13**	**9**	6
Carpenter/joiner (247)	42	19	18	10	7	4
Painter/decorator (91)	43	10	**29**	8	3	6
Site manager (444)	44	17	16	10	6	**7**

Q4. Which, if any, of the following types of construction work have you spent periods of at least 3 months at a time working in?
Unweighted bases in parentheses: all respondents
Note: Figures in bold are statistically higher than the average at the 95% confidence level

Leaving the sector

To assess the potential outflow from the sector in the next five years (led by worker preference), all workers were asked how likely it is that in 5 years' time they will still want to be working in construction.

Close to half (47%) believe they will definitely want to be working in construction in 5 years' time, an uplift on the 43% who expressed this sentiment in 2022, returning this to the level seen in 2018/19 (48%).

A further 23% say this is very likely, down on the 27% who said this in 2022 and the 26% who did so in 2018/19.

Consequently, including those who say it is quite likely, 83% believe this is likely to be the case, in line with 2022 (82%) and remaining somewhat lower than 2018/19 (86%).

In line with previous surveys, under one in ten construction workers consider it unlikely (6%), with just 2% saying they definitely will not be. A further 4% hope to be retired by then, and one in twenty (7%) do not know.

Excluding those aged 60 and over (as those over 60 may be assumed to be considering retirement in the next 5 years): 49% believe they will definitely want to be working in the construction sector, 24% believe it is very likely they will want to be working in the construction sector, and 14% % believe it is quite likely they will want to be working in the construction sector. Overall, 87% of this group are likely to some degree to want to be working in the sector, much in line with the 86% who did so in 2022, and the 88% who did so in 2018/19.

Only 6% think on any level of likelihood that they will not want to be working in the construction sector in 5 years' time (compared to 7% in 2022, 2018/19 and 2015).

UK construction workforce 2025 summary

Workforce challenges

The construction industry contributes about 6% of the UK gross value added (GVA) and is a significant sector for the economy in terms of its output. However, Government policy is reliant on activity within the construction sector on other levels: in terms of economic growth i.e. creating jobs through building new infrastructure to serve public needs and to facilitate improvements in business productivity and efficiency, providing good quality homes for a growing population, and meeting Net Zero targets.

Maintaining and increasing levels of output within the construction industry are key to economic growth, and the industry's workforce is a critical element to achieving what is needed in the next few years. Workers with the right skills and experience are required in the right places, on the right projects, for the industry to deliver what is required of it.

The construction industry's workforce has grown somewhat since the COVID-19 pandemic, but, today, remains smaller than it was in 2019. There is a need to recruit around 200,000 new workers per year because of an industry 'churn rate', estimated at around 8% of a 2.6 million total workforce. However, to deliver government plans for new homes, ensure that current and planned infrastructure projects are progressed, and allow the Net Zero agenda to move forward, it is estimated that an additional nearly 50,000 skilled workers a year will be required for the next 5 years.

It is challenging enough to replace retirees and other leavers, some of whom are very experienced, year after year, but to grow the workforce by the number estimated requires a clear and coordinated plan of action involving both educational institutions and employers, supported by proactive, positive interventions from government, leveraged by the CITB.

Employers have a vested interest in overcoming these labour and skills challenges as without skilled, site-ready individuals they will suffer project delays and increased costs.

However, the survey highlights that, before entering the industry, three quarters of workers had no formal construction-related qualifications, and at the time of interviewing, following a period working in the industry, this had fallen to just under half. Thus, just one in four workers had gained a formal qualification related to construction while working in the industry. This suggests that there is considerable room for improvement in levels of employer-funded and arranged formal training within the industry.

Stability in the workforce

As observed in previous surveys, this year's survey suggests a largely manual workforce that comprises the sample that remains very substantially white and male in its composition.

More than half of survey respondents (52%) report having worked in the industry for at least 10 years, with more than a quarter (28%) having done so for at least 20 years. The survey paints a picture of a steady, established workforce, with the majority of workers (78%) not having worked in another sector, and most (65%) having worked in the industry continuously without spells out of work.

The construction industry, therefore, provides stability for those who want it. This is reflected in who works in it and how long they work in it for. The survey findings suggest that the industry provides a level of job security and employment longevity that might well be part of the attraction for many.

The occupational profile of the workforce, as identified by the 2025 survey, also remains unchanged from previous years, with labourers, bricklayers, site managers, carpenters, and plant operators remaining most common followed by very small minorities of other industry trades.

In 2025, fewer survey respondents than previously, reported changing roles within the industry. Furthermore, more than three quarters indicated a preference for continuing to work within the same trade or occupation. This indicates both a lower level of transfer between trades and roles but also less willingness to move into new areas within the workforce. It suggests that skills gaps may not easily be filled from within the existing workforce.

As well as horizontal movement between occupational groups, there is also vertical progression as an option for workers - taking on supervisory or management roles in specific areas or overall. In 2025, survey findings suggest fewer workers aspire to take on a supervisory or management role than previously. This is both in terms of where those who would like to switch occupations see themselves moving towards (7% of the 6% of survey respondents who would like to change trade or occupation cite a supervisory role – 25% in 2022), and in terms of those who do not currently hold such a role wanting to do so in the future (15%, compared with 24% in 2022).

Little change, or little appetite for change, is less about stability and more about stagnation. Furthermore, occupational switching and promotion are key drivers of formal training within the industry, and with fewer workers wishing to reskill or upskill, formal training and achievement of formal construction-related qualifications, which provide transferable certification, is destined to decline.

The 2025 survey findings suggest that there has not been any improvement in the proportion of workers holding industry Skills Cards since 2022, when it fell somewhat compared with 2018/19, from 97% to 93%, where it now stands. Also, compared with 2018/19, there has been little improvement in the propensity for workers to have entered the industry with formal qualifications relating to construction, fewer have achieved or are working towards formal qualifications during their period of employment in the industry.

Lack of movement or progression – both in respect of promotion or qualification achievement, whether driven by workers happy to remain as they are, or by employers who are not proactive in pushing them forward, may create an environment in which these opportunities for advancement are perceived to be few and far between. This has implications for staff retention and attracting new talent to the industry, as well as impacting training practices and, ultimately, the training infrastructure within the industry.

Some indicators of change

There are clear indications in the survey that the workforce structure and employment prospects within the construction industry are stable and reliable. So, what is changing within the industry? And are changes positive or helpful?

While the survey cannot be used as an official measure regarding the status of employment, the survey findings highlight a reduction in self-employment vis a vis direct employment, which is reflected in official statistics. This trend hints at a move towards safer and more secure direct employment for workers, and greater reliance on employers for training and development. While, traditionally, those in self-employment report lower levels of training than those in direct employment, who are more likely to benefit from employer-funded and arranged training, they will also have a greater need to demonstrate or evidence their skills when searching for their next project.

The 2025 survey findings report fewer workers than previously having moved into construction from another industry (15%, compared with 18% in 2022). Furthermore, those entering from a previous background in manufacturing are still in the minority. New entrants transferring into construction from other industries are not necessarily going to have the technical skills that make for an easier transition for entrants. This may place more demands on employers when it comes to induction and other training, as the distance from a service environment to construction is further than from manual work in a production environment to construction. It may also have implications for retaining new entrants who are experiencing bigger changes and challenges in adapting to their new working environment and reskilling.

The downward trend in working hours has continued in 2025, with the proportion of workers working more than 50 hours per week having decreased since 2018/19, from 24% to 19% in 2022 and now to 16% in 2025. The lower level of self-employment is at least in part a factor in this, with a higher proportion of those in self-employment than directly employed working more than 50 hours a week. Previously (in 2022) we speculated whether reduced working hours reflects some technological changes that are permitting fewer but more productive hours for some workers; or whether workforce culture, in line with general trends since Covid, is disposing some workers to put personal time ahead of overtime hours; or, simply, whether demand pressures in the industry are lower. This survey cannot provide the answers to that.

The 2025 survey also observed a continuation of a decrease in distances travelled to work. For example, 28% had worked more than 50 miles from home in the last year, compared with 32% in 2022, 41% in 2018/19 and 47% in 2015. The average travel distance to work however, was further than reported in 2022 at 21 miles in 2025 (17 miles in 2022, 22 miles in 2018/19 and 28 miles in 2015).

Replacing workers who are retiring or leaving the sector for other reasons is a major challenge when the number that is required is estimated to be around 200,000. Added to that the estimated 50,000 additional workers required to do what needs to be done regarding public infrastructure, environmental and retro-fitting projects and building more homes in the UK. To replace leavers and grow the workforce, there needs to be an increase in recruitment from other sectors, as well as promotion of construction as a career among school leavers.

A stable, steady state of employment, although a positive and reassuring characteristic for an industry, is not where the construction industry needs to be to meet the challenges of the next few years, but it is a good basis on which to build a more dynamic and demand-led sector.

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