



# Building Materials sector Research report September 2024



# Survey confirms the importance of the sector awareness programme



of UK adults recognise the term **building materials**



Almost **9 out of 10**

people do not understand what the **building materials** sector consists of

Over **2 out of 3**



people would not consider a career in **building materials**

**“ Research shows building materials is a familiar term, but people do not understand what the sector is and would not consider a career in it. ”**



# 1 Overview



# Introduction of a new sector

- Builders' merchants and distributors that sell general building materials, timber, plumbing and heating and other specialist products have traditionally been seen as a separate sector from the manufacturers that produce and supply them.
  - The BMF (Builders Merchants Federation) has been facilitating closer collaboration between its members who make up the building materials supply chain. Together they supply the building materials and products needed for building and construction projects.
  - Before the end of 2024, the BMF will launch the building materials sector. For the first time, builders' merchants, building materials distributors, manufacturers and suppliers are being brought together into one unified sector.
  - This launch aims to address the skills shortage faced by BMF members by creating awareness of the variety of interesting career opportunities in the building materials sector.
  - CMDi and YouGov have collaborated to bring you the first ever Building Materials Sector Research Report. The results will be used to help the BMF position the sector clearly as a subsector of the broader construction industry and to help employers attract talented people.
- The data has been interpreted to tell the start of the story of this vibrant sector. Future surveys will track progress of the building materials sector as it gains greater recognition and appeals as a career choice to a diversity of talented people.



# Methodology and sample

This survey has been conducted using an online interview administered to members of the YouGov Plc UK panel of 2.5 million+ individuals who have agreed to take part in surveys.

Emails are sent to panellists selected at random from the base sample. The e-mail invites them to take part in a survey and provides a generic survey link.

Once a panel member clicks on the link, they are sent to the survey that they are most required for, according to the sample definition and quotas.

Invitations to surveys don't expire and respondents can be sent to any available survey.

The responding sample is weighted to the profile of the sample definition to provide a representative reporting sample. The profile is normally derived from census data or, if not available from the census, from industry accepted data.

10 questions about the building materials and construction sectors were included in the YouGov survey conducted on 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> August 2024 and 2,072 people participated.



A dark blue rectangular graphic containing a white circle on the left. Inside the circle are the logos for 'CMDi building sharper brands' (in purple and white) and 'YouGov' (in red). To the right of the circle, the number '2,072' is displayed in large red font, with 'UK survey participants' written below it in white.



# Comparing sectors: building materials and construction



## Awareness and understanding

- 75% of UK adults had heard of the construction sector while only 48% believe they had heard of the building materials sector.
- 13% of the public, even people who had not heard of the sector, correctly identified the few types of businesses in the building materials sector while 8% correctly identified the wide variety of businesses in the construction sector.
- Around 3% of adults were employed in building materials and about 6% in construction.

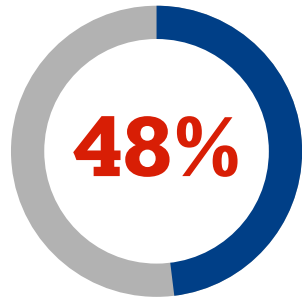
## Attitudes towards careers

- The building materials sector was less attractive than construction with only 16% of adults saying they would consider a career in building materials compared to 19% who would consider a career in the construction sector.
- 65% adults found nothing appealing or did not know what was appealing about a career in the building materials sector.
- 32% of people would not know where to look for information about careers in building materials while 31% go to construction career websites and 30% would go to building materials career websites.
- 33% of people were likely to recommend a career in building materials to a young person, compared to 43% who would recommend construction.

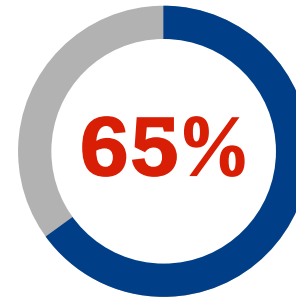
**“ 32% of people would not know where to look for information about careers in building materials. ”**



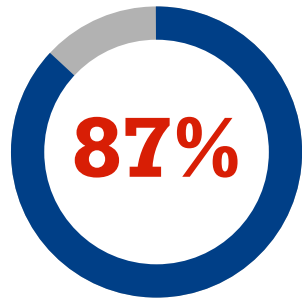
# Key findings



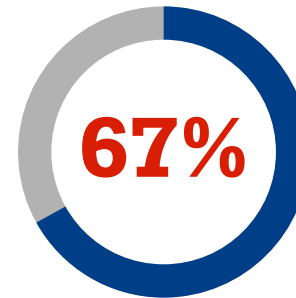
of UK adults had heard of the term building materials



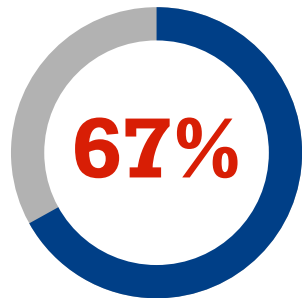
either found nothing appealing or did not know what was appealing



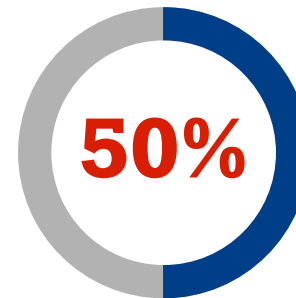
do not understand what the building materials sector consists of



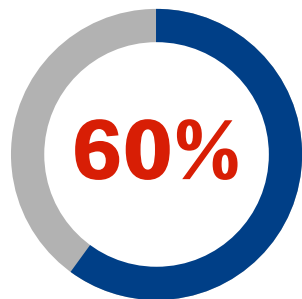
are not likely to recommend or don't know about recommending a career in building materials



would not consider a career in the building materials sector



would go to a website to find out about careers in the building materials sector



of 18-24-year-olds would not consider a career in building materials



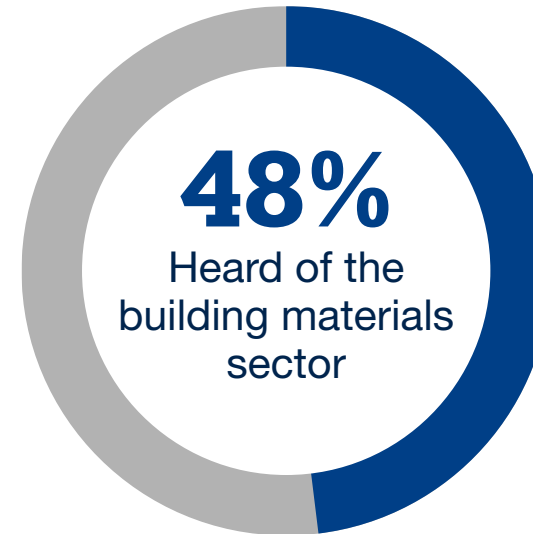
# 2

## Awareness and understanding

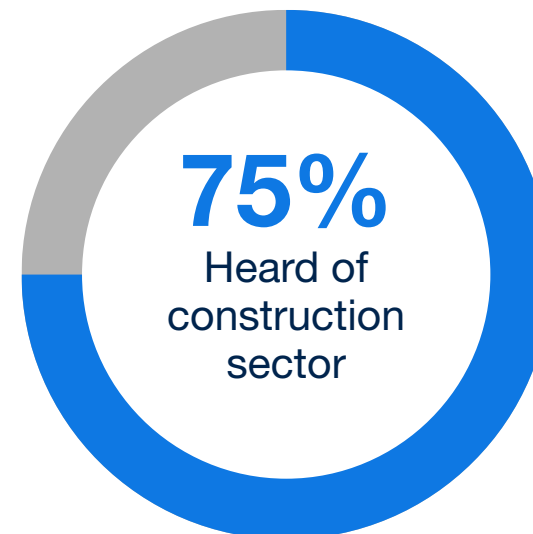


# Building materials sounded familiar

- Although the sector is completely new, a surprising 48% of UK adults claimed to have heard of the building materials sector compared to 75% for the construction sector.
- While it is unlikely that almost half of UK adults would have heard of a totally new sector, it is an indication that building materials is a clear and familiar descriptor for the sector.
- This bodes well for the future because it means that the BMF need not start building awareness from scratch.
- Instead, the focus can be on providing a clear understanding of the scope of employers and job roles in building materials.

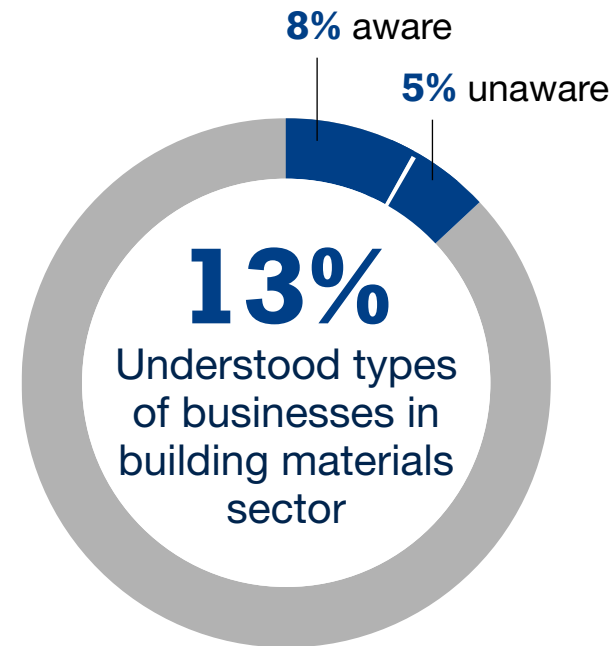


## Sector awareness

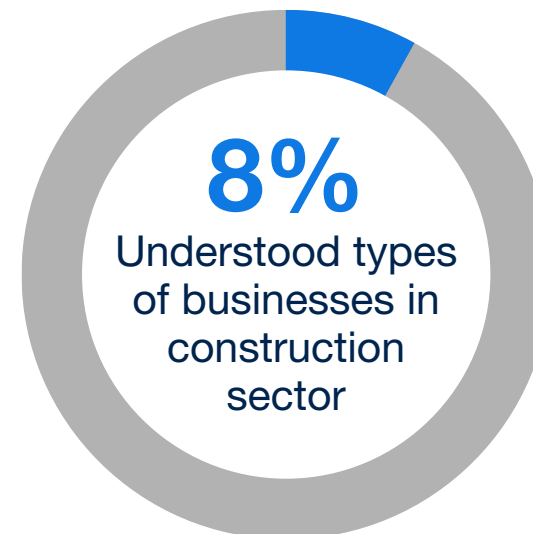


# Sector understanding is a good start

- A total of 13% of people correctly identified the types of businesses to be found in the building materials sector compared to only 8% of those who were aware for the construction sector.
- While only 8% of people were aware of and understood the building materials sector, a further 5% (those who had not heard of the sector) correctly identified that it consisted of manufacturers, suppliers, distributors and merchants.
- Understanding was low among sector employees.
- All percentages for construction stayed at 8%.
- This indicates that building materials is a clear descriptor of the types of employers one could expect to find in the sector.



## Sector understanding

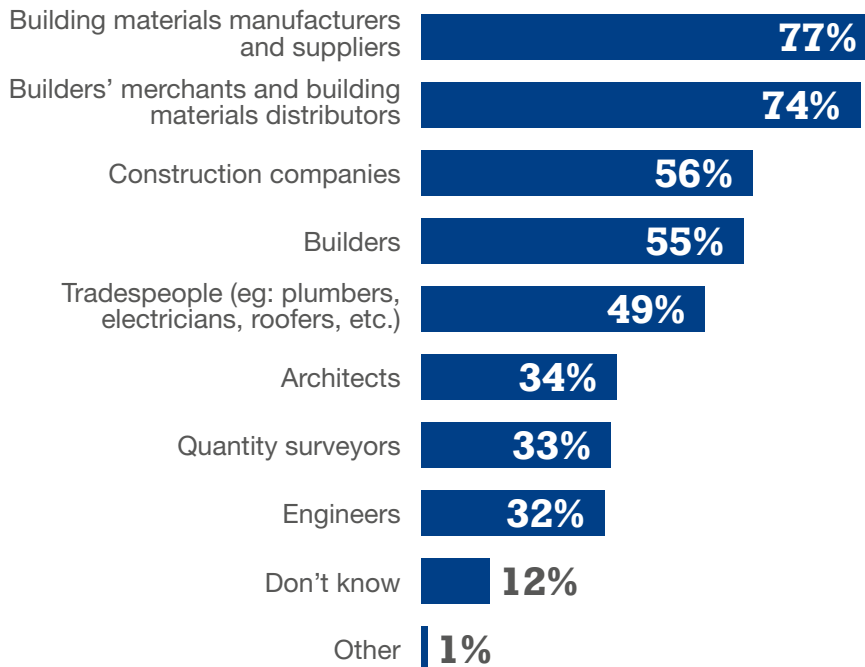


# Building materials and construction were seen as similar

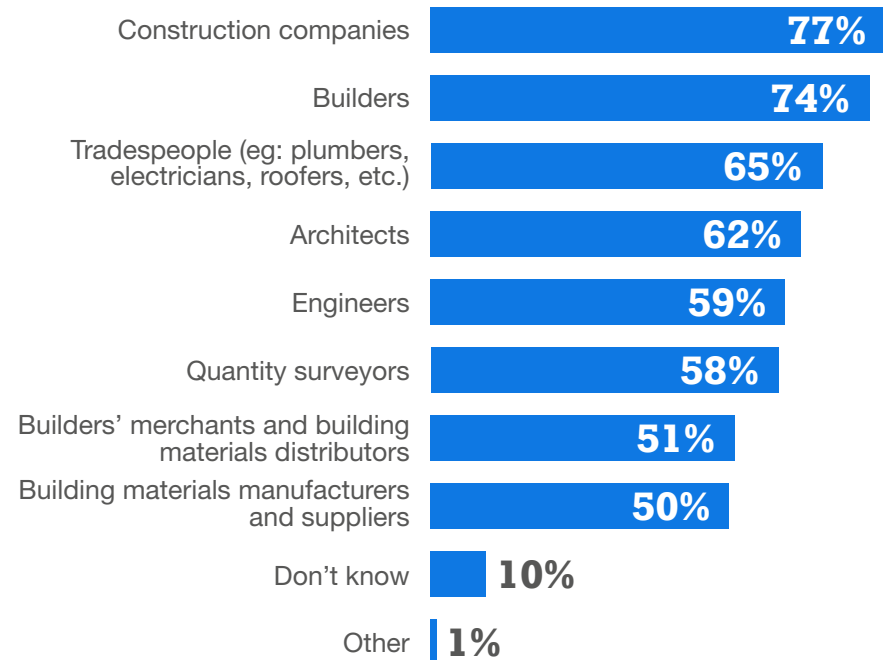


While more people expected to find manufacturers, suppliers, distributors and merchants in the building materials sector, and more people expected to find construction companies and builders in the construction sector, the overlap is substantial. This indicates a lack of clear understanding and differentiation between the two sectors.

## Types of businesses you would expect to find in the building materials sector



## Types of businesses you would expect to find in the construction sector





# 3 Attitudes towards careers



# Definitions given



## Building materials sector

For the following questions, by “building materials sector”, we mean the sector which is the supply side of the wider construction industry. All the building materials and products needed for building and construction projects are manufactured, distributed and sold by this sector. Employers include builders’ merchants and distributors that sell general building materials, timber, plumbing and heating and other specialist products plus the manufacturers that produce and supply them.

## Construction sector

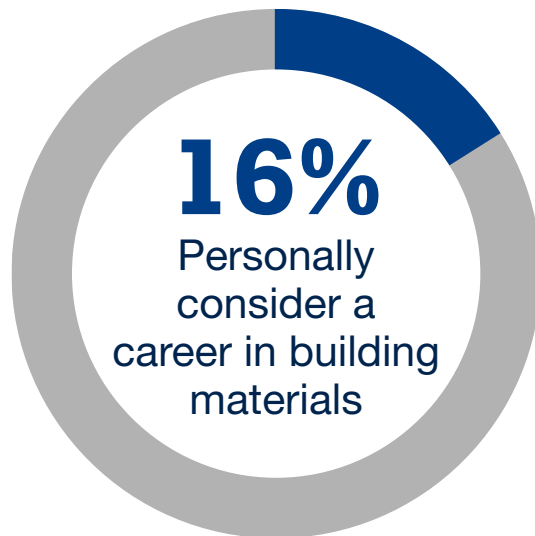
For the following questions, by “construction sector”, we mean the sector which builds, repairs and maintains homes, commercial and industrial buildings, roads and infrastructure. Employers include construction companies, contractors, builders, architects, engineers, quantity surveyors and skilled tradespeople who collaborate on construction projects that create our built environment.



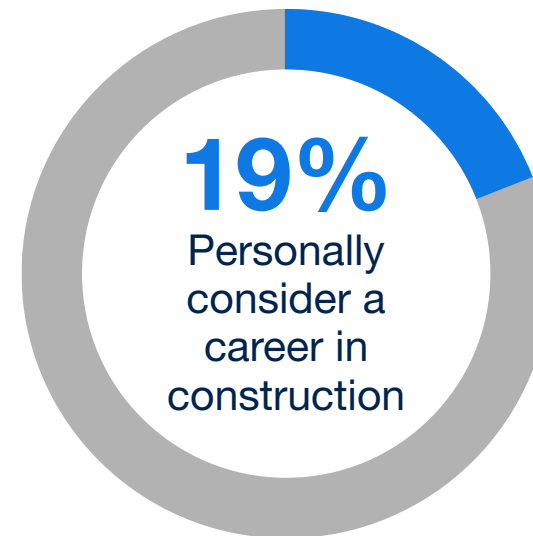
# A career in building materials is less appealing than construction

- After being given definitions, only 16% of UK adults would personally consider a career in the building materials sector.

- The construction sector was more appealing with 19% of people saying they would personally consider a career in the sector.



Personally consider a career in the sector

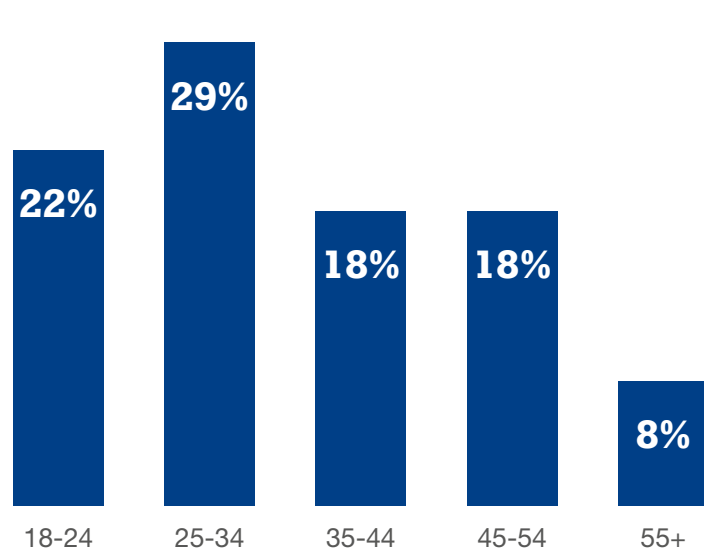


# Younger people are more open to a career in building materials

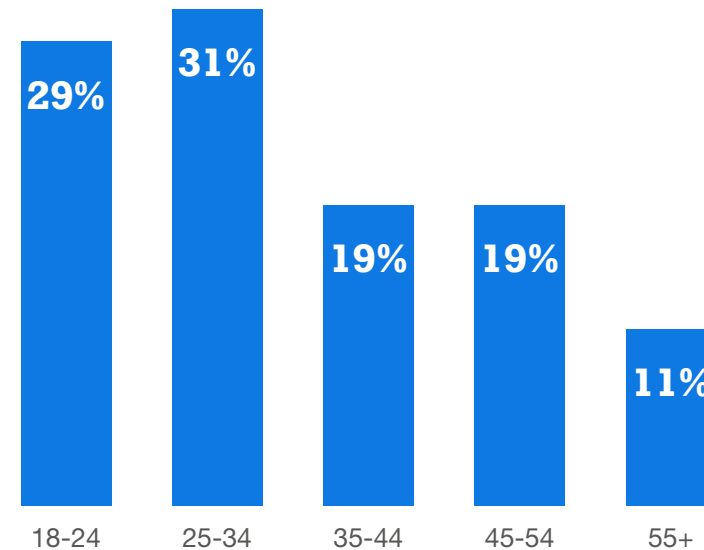


Likelihood to consider a career in building materials decreases with age. Fewer 18-24-year-olds would consider a career in building materials than construction with only 22% saying they would consider a career in building materials while 29% would consider a career in construction.

Would consider a career in building materials by age



Would consider a career in construction by age



# Males are twice as open to a career in building materials



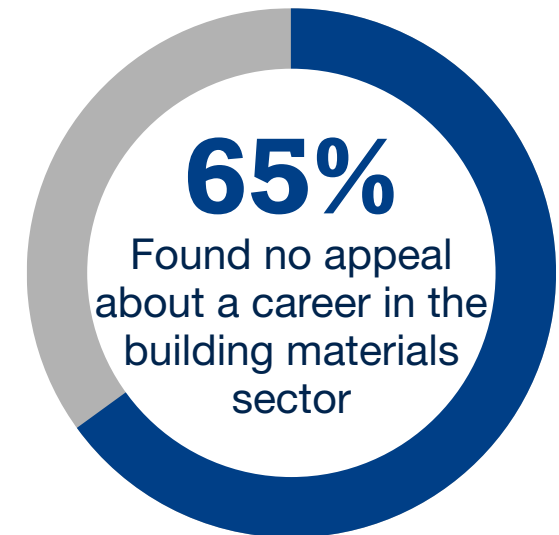
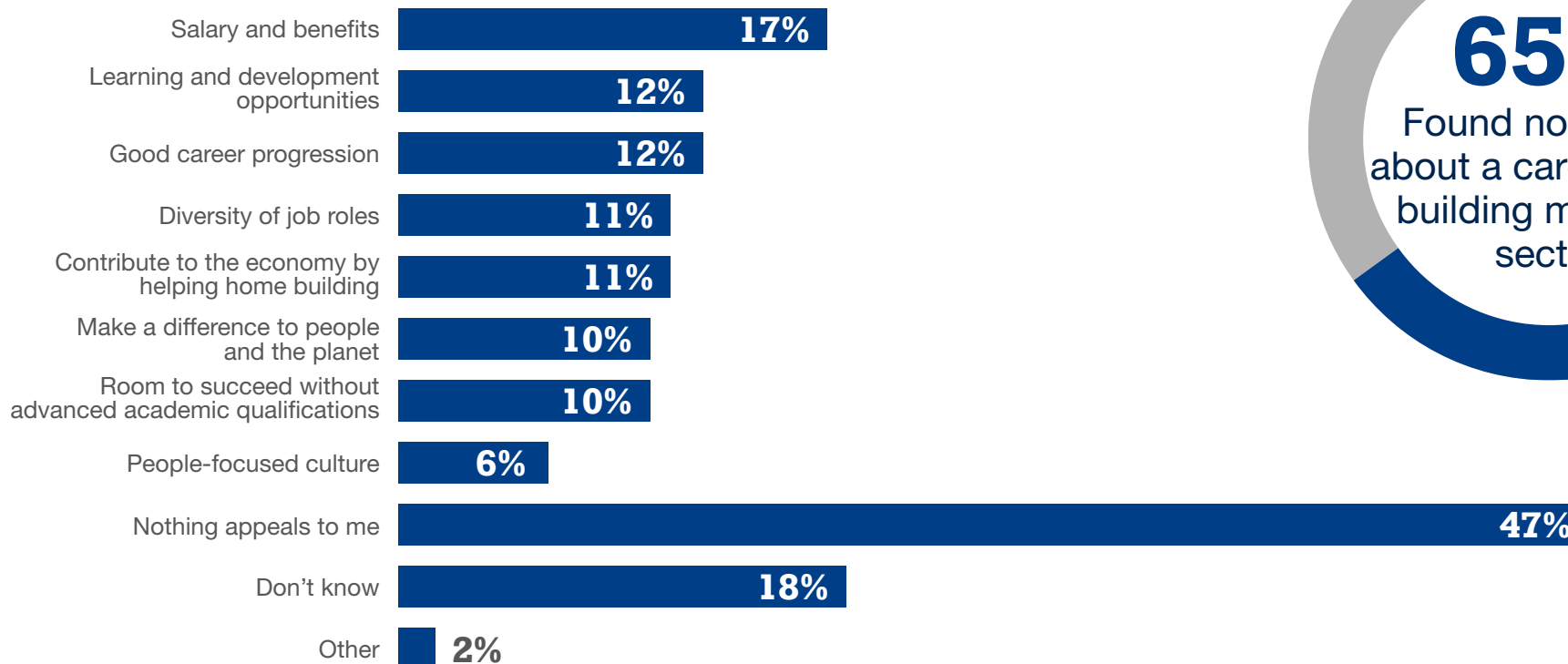
21% of males would consider a career in building materials compared to 11% of females while 24% of males would consider a career in construction.



# Almost half of people found nothing appealing

65% of adults in the UK either found nothing appealing or did not know what was appealing about a career in the building materials sector. Salary and benefits is the top factor that appeals to 17% of people, while a people-focused culture is the least appealing factor with just 6% selecting it.

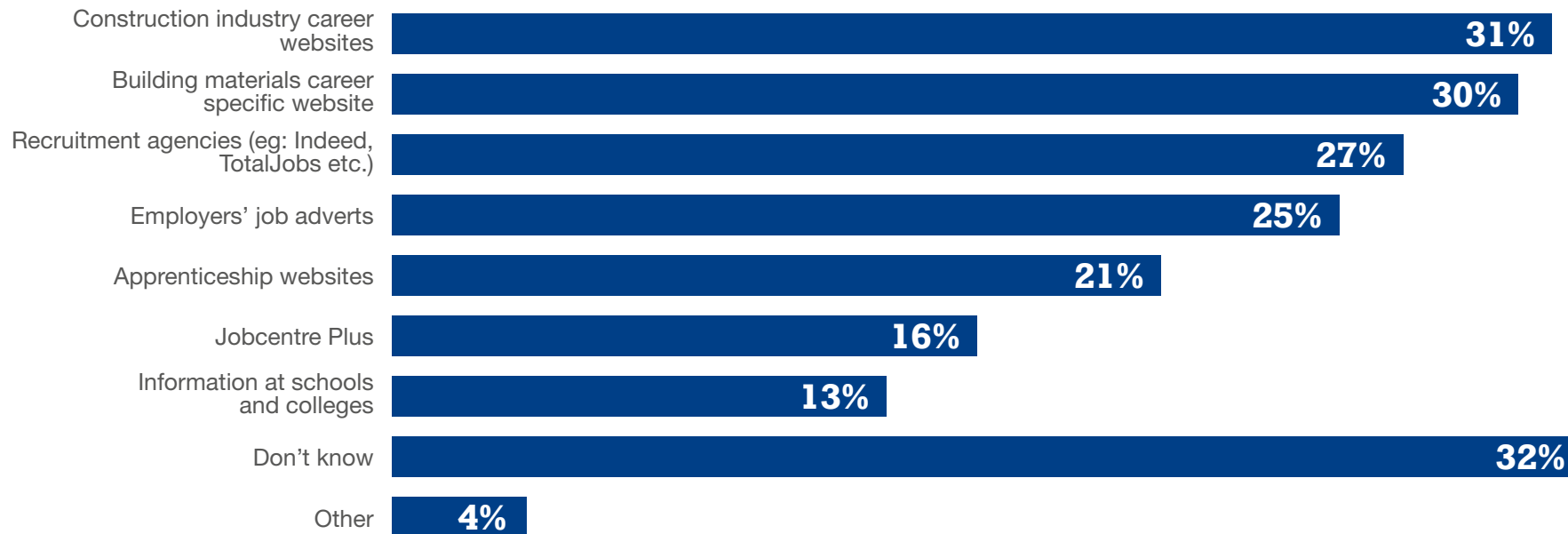
## Factors that appeal to you about a career in the building materials sector



# A third would not know where to look for career information

32% of people would not know where to find out about careers in the building materials sector, 31% would visit construction career websites and 30% would go to building materials career websites.

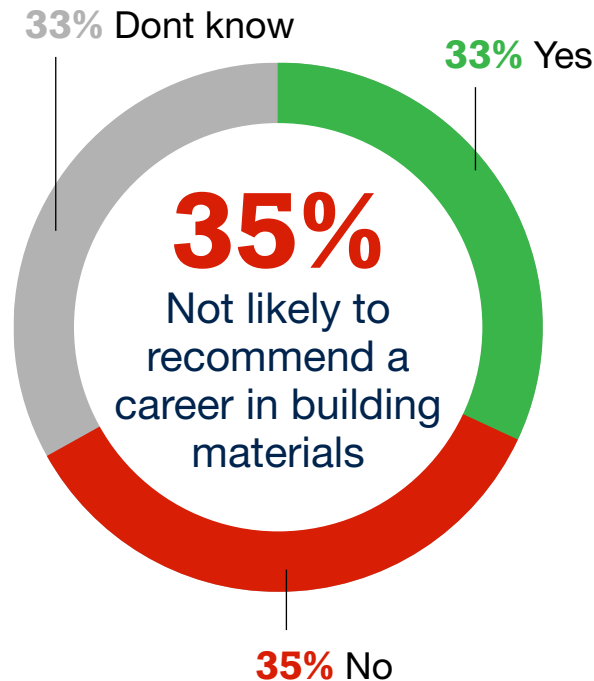
## Places you would likely go to in order to find out about careers in the building materials sector



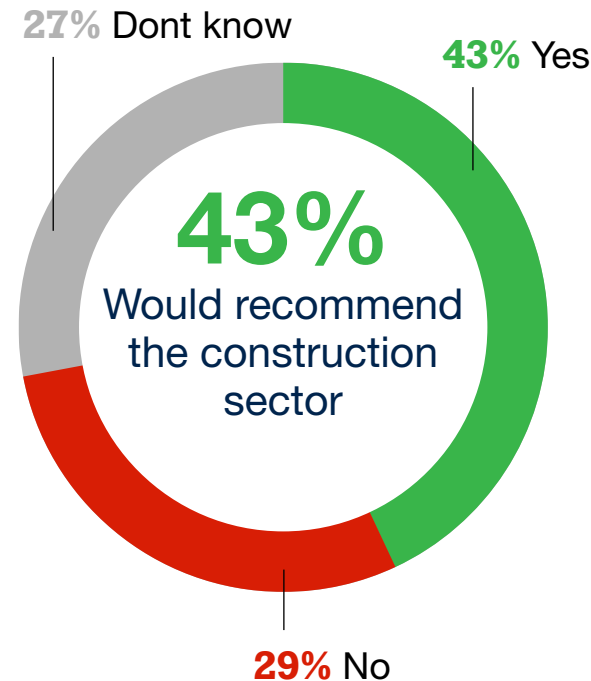
# Two thirds would not recommend or don't know enough to recommend a career in building materials

■ 35% of UK adults were not likely to recommend a career in the building materials sector to a young person and 33% did not know enough to make a recommendation.

■ However, 43% would recommend the construction sector.



Recommend careers to young people





# 4 Conclusions



# Conclusions

The building materials sector may sound familiar to many, but it is easily confused with the construction sector.

Familiarity means there is awareness, so the focus will be on providing clarity that the building materials sector is a subsector of the wider construction industry.

The vital purpose of the sector will also be emphasised – To supply all the building materials and products needed for building and construction projects.

The varied job roles will be conveyed and elevated by linking them to the important purpose of the building materials sector in relation to construction.

With the term building materials being such a clear descriptor, it will be simple to communicate the primary types of employers in the sector.

# What is the Sector Awareness Programme?

- The sector awareness programme is the BMF's high profile initiative designed to **put the Building Materials sector on the map**, professionalise our HR infrastructure and make us much more attractive to career starters, career switchers and talented people already employed in the sector.



“ It’s a programme that every member can get behind and benefit from ”

- With the strapline “**Materially Different**” and new website [bmcareers.com](http://bmcareers.com), this high impact campaign will highlight **why a career in Building Materials is different from a role in other industries**.
- We will appeal to a **diverse audience** and generate awareness of the many and varied career opportunities available to them.

# Find out more



## BMF

The BMF (Builders Merchants Federation) is the **only** trade association representing merchants and suppliers in the UK and Ireland. Our vision is to enable members to 'build excellence' in building materials supply. Total membership as of 1 Sept 2024 stands at 1,000 merchant and supplier companies who together have combined sales of £50.2bn and employ just under 203,000 people in the building materials sector. The BMF's 521 merchant members, including 82 now from Ireland, operate from over 6,500 branches across the UK and Ireland.

[www.bmf.org.uk](http://www.bmf.org.uk)





# Building Materials sector Research report

September 2024



For more information visit:  
[www.bmf.org.uk](http://www.bmf.org.uk)

Report by CMDi on behalf of the BMF  
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