CIC 2050 Group
Construction Industry Survey 2017

Looking towards an evolving construction industry
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Executive Summary

The CIC 2050 Group comprises of early career professionals whose vision is to provide a collaborative forum and platform for members of all construction disciplines and professional bodies. One of the key outputs of the 2050 Group is the annual CIC 2050 Group survey.

The previous survey, in 2014, garnered just over 700 respondents. This 2017 survey garnered 254 respondents (36% respondent rate compared with the 2014 survey). The 2014 survey had 31 questions, whereas the 2017 survey was streamlined to a total of 20 questions.

Some of the 2014 survey questions were reused in the 2017 survey. The 2014 survey questions kept in the 2017 survey were for a like-for-like comparison to determine change over three years – refer to below for some of the key 2014 questions replicated for the 2017 survey, with differences in the responses between the 2014 and 2017 survey highlighted:

- **Through your job, are you able to make a positive difference to the industry?**
  The 2017 survey shows an overall decline in the belief of industry professionals that they can make a positive difference to the industry.

- **Would you recommend the industry as a good one to join?**
  The 2017 survey response, in terms of ‘Yes’ category, is an improvement of about 5% (2014 survey yielded a respondent rate of 75% in the ‘Yes’ category). The ‘No’ category saw an improvement also, from 12% to 9%, from the 2014 and 2017 survey respectively. The ‘Not Sure/Indifferent’ category likewise also saw an improvement from 14% to 11% from the 2014 and 2017 survey respectfully.

- **Prior to joining the industry did you study a construction/built environment industry course?**
  In the 2014 survey, 53% of the respondents had completed relevant course - or studied a relevant subject - prior to joining the industry – for the 2017 survey, 60% of the respondents studied a relevant course, thus representing a 7% improvement.
Introduction

The Construction Industry Council (CIC) 2050 Group comprises dynamic industry early career professionals, who represent a wide range of disciplines across the built environment, aiming to provide a collaborative forum and platform for members of all construction disciplines and professional bodies.

This report provides an overview of an industry-wide survey conducted by the CIC 2050 group in 2017, which looked at attitudes and perceptions towards the construction industry and general built environment professions.

This study follows a similar survey which was undertaken in 2014, and is available on the CIC website. Overall the survey reveals a positive impression of working in construction and the built environment, with 76% of respondents stating that they believe they are able to make a positive difference to the industry. Moreover, 80% of respondents would also recommend the construction industry as good industry to join, with a further 11% indifferent, and only 9% replying in the negative.

These figures provide a generally positive overview, and not significantly different from the 2014 survey, however encouraging students and school leavers to consider careers in the built environment remains a growing challenge.
Recent reports have shown that there is a shortfall in annual engineering graduates needed to fulfil national construction pipelines, and that there is a continuing shortage of specialist trade workers.

Careers in construction and the built environment can often follow non-traditional routes, and career progression or expectations are often ambiguous. The wide variety of careers and entry points, from apprenticeships, to studying construction or engineering at higher level, to those who cross over from other fields such as physics, geography and so on, is both a positive and negative aspects of construction. The variety of people and projects creates exciting opportunities, but it can also be difficult for students or school leavers to imagine a career in the construction industry.

Tellingly, two thirds of respondents (66%) in the survey admitted they didn’t have clear expectations of what working in the industry would be like.

We also have to deal with the misconception of our industry. Often considered to be a dirty or manually intensive; demystifying careers in the built environment is particularly key to ensuring we continue to attract the best and brightest to our industry, across all sectors and levels.

There are of course some excellent programmes which are aiming to address this, including SATRO, RICS Inspire Workshops, and Built By Us and the current government yearlong initiative ‘Year of Engineering’.

These organisations and campaigns are working to encourage to support students and young people in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics
(STEM) activities, and to encourage them to consider careers in construction. Many of these also work to address the issue of diversity in our industry, an issue which continues to affect those working in the built environment, and which has an impact in attracting people to professions and careers in construction and built environment.

Survey respondents were also asked to provide the length of time they have working in the construction and built environment industries, which revealed that more than 55% of respondents had 20+ years’ experience. Only 25% of respondents were between the 0-9 years of experience bracket, leading us to question, where are the young professionals? While we acknowledge the limitations of the survey and its distribution, this statistic does raise a discussion on the level of engagement with wider industry groups as young or early career professionals.

There are a number of programmes, such as UK Green Building Council (UKGBC), NLA’s NexGen, Constructing Excellence G4C and other recent events, such as CIC 2050 Group Annual Speed Mentoring which aim to bring together young professionals, but there is space for further collaborative industry events and activities for early career professionals.

One of the key aims of the 2050 group is to provide a space for discussing a low or zero carbon future by 2050, which was reflected in part of our survey. In 2013 the UK government released a joint strategy from government and industry for the future of the UK construction industry by 2025, with one aim being to reduce Greenhouse gas emissions (GHE) by 50% by 2025. Half of our respondents (50%) to our survey felt that the industry is capable of this aim, but is not doing currently doing enough to achieve this. A further 25% felt that more knowledge and technology is needed to reach this 50% reduction target by 2025. The construction industry is notoriously slow to adapt and change, but with increasing digitisation of processes, the use of BIM and environmental analysis, a growing cleantech industry and further government funding through The catapult and Innovate UK programmes, we are hopeful that construction industry will begin to a new age of change and meet our 2025 targets.
The necessity to innovate and embrace change is reflected at both organizational and individual scales. 89% of respondents felt that they will need to innovate more in their job in the future, perhaps reflecting an increase on innovation from organizations generally.

Lastly, but by no means least, we asked respondents about the impact of Brexit on the UK construction industry. Just over three quarters agreed that Brexit will have a negative impact on the industry, but there was a mix of opinion as to whether this would be in the short, medium or long term. This issue is one of the topical issues firmly high up on the construction industry agenda, and will for many years to come as we continue to adapt to this changing political and economic environment. The CIC publishes a regular Brexit digest for members.

This survey, and the previous survey in 2014, provides a brief indication of perceptions and attitudes to the industry, and several topical subjects. It is intended to spark discussion and dialogue around these issues, and to signpost to relevant industry activities which may be of interest. The CIC 2050 group intends to use the survey to guide our future activities and to support our overall aims.

The 2017 survey was purposely set up to cover the following topical themes:

- General overview of the Built Environment / Construction Industry
- Inclusion & Diversity
- Innovation
- Brexit and its impact on the UK Construction Industry
Question by question analysis

Q1. How many full years have you worked in the construction/built environment industry?

Analysis

The '0-3 years' and '4-9 years' band combined is 25%, or a quarter of all of the respondents. On the other hand '10-14 years', '15-19 years' and '20+ years' band consists of 75% or three quarters of the respondents.

This finding shows genuine care by the more experienced professionals in our industry. It needs to be borne in mind how busy these professionals are busy with their jobs and that their participation in the survey shows that they need to be listened to in this survey, with their perspectives/feedback acted upon.
Q2. What is your gender?

Analysis

The females consist of almost a quarter of total respondents which is welcome, especially when the age profile of this survey is taken into account.

Six respondents preferred not to state their gender. This constitutes nearly 2.5% of the survey – this means more gender options will need to be provided in the next CIC 2050 Annual Survey. As this is important to analyse the inclusivity of our industry going forward.
Q3. What is your age group?

Analysis

This question is similar to Q1 but precisely examines the age make-up of this survey. The age bands ‘33-39’, ‘40-55’ and ‘55+’ constitute almost 90% of the survey respondents. On the other hand the age bands ‘16-21’, ‘22-25’ and ‘26-29’ constitutes only 17% of the respondents.

This can be seen as a cause for concern considering the aging profile of the construction industry personnel.
Q4. What is your profession?

Analysis

Civil Engineer, as a profession, with almost 12% respondents, was the most popular stated position in this survey. However, the ‘Other’ answers choice was the most selected answer choice, with a response rate of nearly 32%.

This finding indicates the great variety and diversity of roles across the built environment and that future generations of workers in the industry should be made aware of this, for a rewarding and exciting career.
Those in the ‘Other’ bracket made comments in which are reflected in the word cloud shown:
Q5. What type of organisation do you work for?

Analysis

Consultant was the most popular answer choice with almost a 34% respondent rate. The ‘Other’ answer choice came in with a respondent rate of 17%. Similarly to Q4, it shows the great variety and diversity of organisations across the built environment.
Those in the ‘Other’ bracket made comments in which are reflected in the word cloud shown, in the next page:
Q6. Through your job, are you able to make a positive difference to the industry?

76% respondents believe that they are indeed able to make a positive difference to the construction industry. This is a welcome find amid the changing nature of the industry as it positions itself for the future. In contrast, the ‘no’ respondent rate was a lowly 5%. Furthermore, 20% of the respondents however feel they would like to do more to make a positive difference.

2014 Survey comparison

The same question was asked of the respondents in the 2014 survey and the ‘Yes’ answer came in with 80% respondents. The ‘Not Sure’ answer came in with a 12% respondent rate.

This overall shows a decline in the belief of industry professionals that they can make a positive difference to the industry.
Q7. Would you recommend the industry as a good one to join?

Analysis

80% of respondents believe the construction industry is a good one to join. Only 9% of respondents disagree with this one, with 11% being indifferent on this – this in essence is a 20% respondent rate disagreeing with the survey question. In other words, 1 in 5 respondents could not recommend industry as a good one to join.

2014 Survey comparison

The 2017 survey response, in terms of ‘Yes’ category, is an improvement of about 5% (2014 survey yielded a respondent rate of 75% in the ‘Yes’ category). The ‘No’ category saw an improvement also, from 12% to 9%, from the 2014 and 2017 survey respectively. The ‘Not Sure/Indifferent’ category likewise also saw an improvement from 14% to 11% respectfully.
Q8. Prior to joining the industry did you study a construction industry/built environment course?

Analysis

Just more than 60% of the respondents studied a construction industry/built environment. This makes for an interesting finding that considering 90% of the survey respondents are between 33 and 55 years old – this does not come across as a surprise. The focus in the future 2050 Group surveys will be on the changing profile/response of this question.
Q9. Prior to joining the industry did you have clear expectations of what working in the industry would be like?

![Bar chart showing responses to Q9]

**Analysis**

Two thirds (67%) of the survey respondents did not have clear expectations of what working in the industry would be like. This contrasts strikingly with one third (33%) respondents who indeed had clear expectations of what working with the industry would be like.
Refer to the word cloud shown below that reflects the comments made by some of the respondents:
Q10. Did your training or education prepare you for the industry?

Analysis

Whilst 67% of respondents, in response to the previous question (Q9) stated that they did not have clear expectations of what working in the industry would be like, more than half of the respondents stated that training/education has however prepared them for the industry. This is in line with the feedback to Q8 in this survey (“Prior to joining the industry, did you study a construction industry/built environment course?”)

On the other hand, it needs to be borne in mind that only 43% respondents, in terms of training or education, did not prepare them for the industry.
Q11. Does your company offer enough training to cope with the demands of your role?

Analysis

It is encouraging to see that 71% of respondents agreed that their employers agreed that their employers offered enough training to help them cope with the demands of their role. It indicates that construction is an ever-changing industry and that companies recognise it and looks to proactively address it.

Those in the ‘Other’ bracket made comments in which are reflected in the word cloud shown:
Q12. Are there specific aspects about your job that make you consider leaving the construction industry/built environment? Select up to three aspects

Analysis

Stress stands out as a specific aspect that makes the respondents consider leaving the industry. This is a cause for concern. It has been known for some time it is an issue that will not go away but for this survey to indicate stress is still the highest aspect that makes professionals leave the industry.

Essentially more needs to be done about this, especially when it comes to future proofing our industry, in terms of human resources.
Salary, among the other choices to this survey question, was surprisingly high at 24%, for what is generally, in some quarters, considered a well-paid industry.

On the flip-side, 31% stated that they are happy with how things are with them. Although it could be felt that this figure should be higher – it shows that there are many factors that need addressing to address the manpower deficiencies in the construction industry in the near future.

Those in the ‘Other’ bracket made comments in which are reflected in the word cloud shown:
**Q13. Do you feel that the industry is capable of reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 50% by 2025?**

The majority of the respondents believe the industry is capable of reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 50% by 2025 but that the industry however is not doing enough in that regard.

A quarter of the respondents believe that more knowledge, technology is needed to reach this 50% reduction target by 2025. This is a cause for concern as companies, leaders, peers and professional bodies should be doing more on this and reduce the knowledge deficit and enhance technology – or make it more readily available/accessible – to meet the Greenhouse Gas Emissions reduction target.
Q14. Do you think that the industry considers other impacts on climate change such as flooding, water shortages, overheating etc?

**Analysis**

Similarly to Q13, almost a third of respondents (29%) believe the industry is not doing enough to incorporate adoption measures. Almost another third of respondents (28%) believe further knowledge is needed on adapting change.
Q15. Do you think you will need to innovate more to do your job in the future?

Analysis

The overwhelmingly majority of respondents feel they need to innovate more to do their job in the future. This indicates the ever changing nature of the industry, as it continues to evolve as a more efficient industry. This also highlights the continued dynamism of the industry, which is helpful in terms of attracting new talent in the industry.
Q16. What do you think the industry needs to do to compete with other sectors and what can we learn from other industries? (e.g. aerospace, manufacturing, engineering)

Analysis

The findings from this question can be summarised in the point cloud below:
Q17. Do you agree with the statement: 'gender inequality is still a major issue in the construction industry'?

Analysis

This topical survey question generated two thirds (67%) of respondents agreeing that gender inequality is still a major issue in the construction industry.

Furthermore, nearly a quarter of respondents however do not believe it is a major issue. This is against the perceived general feeling in the industry that gender inequality is still a major problem, especially on construction sites and in the upper echelons of management hierarchy in companies operating in the built environment/construction industry. This could possibly be attributed to the fact that respondents believe the industry has worked on this inequality issues in previous years and that we are starting to see the benefits of the addressing of the issue.

Also, one in ten respondents do not know whether gender inequality is still a major problem in the industry. It will be interesting to see if there is any change in this question in the next CIC 2050 Group Annual Survey.
Q18. Is your organisation doing enough to improve the diversity balance?

Analysis

It is encouraging that organisations, based on 62% of respondents, are doing enough to improve the diversity balance. This indicates drive among organisations to improve diversity is happening.

Whilst this finding is welcome, complacency cannot creep in, where it is expected other organisations drive this diversity balance issue, at the expense of other organisations, particularly SME, doing the work. This possibly connects with the fact that quarter (25%) of respondents believe their organisation is not doing enough.

Finally, slightly more than one in ten respondents do not know whether their organisation is doing enough to improve the diversity balance. It needs to be considered that the two largest age profiles of the respondents are 40 – 55 years old (33% of responses) and 55 years old plus (33% of responses) which may indicate ignorance, or lack of awareness, or insufficient leadership from organisations in the construction industry.
Q19. Do you believe the industry will suffer harm because of Brexit?

Analysis

As it was to be expected, respondents overwhelmingly believe the construction industry/built environment will suffer, in the short, medium and long term.

In contrast, slightly over one in ten respondents believe the industry will not suffer harm because of Brexit.

This issue is one of the topical issues firmly high up on the construction industry agenda. With that in mind, the Construction Industry Council publishes a regular Brexit CIC digest for its members to keep them abreast of developments that may impact on its members and the industry in general.
Q20. If you think Brexit will have an impact on the construction industry, please rank the following choices in order of impact (1 being the highest impact and 6 being the least).

Analysis

Shown below is the ranking of respondents to this question with section (1) being the highest respondents and section (6) being the lowest.

1. Decrease in skills/labour
2. Decrease in investment
3. Increase in material prices
4. Increase in investment
5. Decrease in materials costs/supply
6. Increase in skills / labour

Section (4) Increase in investment is an interesting one to note, considering the close call in the Brexit referendum.
About the CIC 2050 Group

The CIC 2050 Group comprises of early career professionals whose vision is to provide a collaborative forum and platform for members of all construction disciplines and professional bodies. The group focuses on promoting a sustainable construction industry and to support those entering careers in the construction industry / built environment. The Group aims to develop ideas, share knowledge and enable communication, with an integrated voice, to other stakeholders.

For further information visit:

http://cic.org.uk/networks-and-committees/2050group.php