



Office for Product
Safety & Standards

Exploring Experiences of Non-Specialists in Relation to Construction Products Purchasing and Use

Qualitative research report on behalf of OPSS from YouGov

October 2023



This report was commissioned by the Office for Product Safety and Standards from YouGov.

The views expressed in this report are those of the authors, not necessarily those of the Office for Product Safety and Standards (OPSS) or the Department for Business and Trade (DBT), nor do they necessarily reflect government policy.

Report contents

Project background and methodology	4	
Research background and objectives		4
Research methodology and sample		4
Key findings	6	
The construction process: Planning phase	7	
Planning involvement		7
Planning knowledge		8
Case study 1		10
The construction process: Construction phase		11
Motivation and experience		11
Product knowledge and choice		16
Case study 2		21
Improving safety, knowledge, and regulation	22	
Knowledge and importance of safety and regulation		22
Case study 3		26
Recommendations	27	
Appendix	28	

Project background and methodology

Research background and objectives

The Office for Product Safety and Standards (OPSS), the national regulator for all consumer products, except for vehicles, medicines and food and the national regulator for legal metrology, is building an evidence base regarding attitudes, understanding and behaviour around construction and construction products. In 2022 OPSS commissioned YouGov to conduct research with domestic clients¹ on their awareness and understanding of the construction process, including safety information and other potential risks.

In 2023 OPSS commissioned this follow up qualitative research to explore the experiences of non-specialists, defined as those who are not employed in the construction sector engaged in the use of construction products; exploring their use of construction products in work on their property.

The objectives of this research were to gather information on:

- Non-specialists' knowledge of construction products and product safety implications
- Motivations of non-specialists to conduct work, including cost and trust in other contractors.
- Engagement and confidence with approvals, completion certificates or other documentation.
- Understanding of technical information, alongside trust resources and advisors.
- Exploring key criteria when purchasing materials.

Research methodology and sample

YouGov spoke with a wide range of participants with differing contexts and experiences of purchasing and using construction products on their own properties. As part of this research, YouGov conducted 30 interviews with non-specialists in August 2023, interviews were conducted over Zoom or over the phone.

The sample were all recruited through the YouGov panel, which includes 2.8 million adults in the UK. A small survey (called a screener, included in the Appendix of this report) was deployed to ensure the frame below was achieved. YouGov researchers sent the screener to panellists who had been previously identified homeowners, before collecting more details on the construction completed in their home to ensure they fit the rest of our recruitment criteria.

The sample for this project was achieved by recruiting participants who were carrying out or had carried out within the past 12 months extensive construction work on their property. This included projects that we believe used products which fall under the remit of OPSS' responsibilities, however, this cannot be guaranteed for every project, nor can responses and insight given be definitively connected to specific products within OPSS' remit, as proportionate recruitment was constrained by the use of YouGov's Panel and participant's self-identified use of construction products.

¹ 'Domestic client' is defined as any individual who has construction work carried out on their home, or the home of a family member, that is not done as part of any business.

Due to the research group being non-specialists, it would be unreasonable for participants to be asked to identify specific products to ascertain if they fell under the scope of Construction Products Regulation. As a result, this work provides an illustrative view of the work carried out in this space and the issues, risks, and challenges associated with it, both at present and under the future construction products regime. Further detail on the projects carried out by participants is noted in the annex.

The sample frame for recruitment is outlined below:

- All participants to be 'non-specialists' e.g., DIYers currently undergoing construction work or to have conducted construction in their home in the past 12 months;
- Mix of expertise and scale / complexity of construction projects e.g. extensions and conversions;
- Mix of confidence with the construction process and safety implications of products;
- Mix of age, gender, ethnicity and region;
- Include a mix of socio-economic status / income / education level;
- Include those with disabilities.

A summary of each interviewee and the work they completed is included in the appendix of this report.

Fieldwork:

30 interviews were conducted over zoom, each interview lasted approximately 45 minutes and was semi-structured, each interview covered questions from the discussion guide (include in the appendix of this report).

Analysis:

The qualitative data was analysed using thematic analysis. This is an inductive technique that involves establishing categories and then identifying systematic links between them. The thematic analysis was conducted by the three researchers who conducted the fieldwork. The researchers referred to professional transcripts during their individual analysis, alongside this they collectively analysed findings in a joint brainstorm session to increase the inter-rater reliability and credibility of the analysis.

Key findings

This project identified non-specialists involved across the entirety of the construction process. Both formal and informal planning takes place, along with ad-hoc planning often due to unexpected delays or issues during the build.

Motivation for undertaking DIY largely centred around cost, completing the construction without a specialist meant that significant costs were saved on labour, this was important for many due to the cost-of-living crisis and the increase in the cost of construction materials.

Other motivations included working in an adjacent industry e.g., artist or estate agent, which meant that non-specialists had interest or skill in construction; as well as this, poor past experiences with specialists were a motivating factor as non-specialists wished to have more control over their build. Although having friends or family in the construction industry meant that they could be relied upon for advice when needed.

Knowledge and advice were also obtained through online research from sites such as YouTube, alongside advice from friends and family or local suppliers. Many also had built up their confidence through previous experiences in construction.

However, many non-specialists felt that their confidence was not extensive in all areas and that they 'knew where the line was' when it came to work conducted in their home, for example where electrical work or plumbing required a specialist.

Similar to the construction process, there was mixed product knowledge across interviews. Product knowledge is dependent on previous experience, level of research conducted online and reliance on the knowledge and experience of friends and family.

Choosing products tends to be a balance of cost and quality. Non-specialists prioritise quality as it equates to durability and longevity which is critical, however they do not tend to go for top of the range as they are often conducting DIY to save on costs. Aesthetics are also important, whereas safety standards tend to be assumed when purchasing products from reputable brands. Those who were undertaking large scale work tended to consider safety more so than those conducting more 'straightforward' work. The environment was not felt to be a top priority when purchasing products however longevity, and therefore sustainability was felt to be important.

There was mixed knowledge around safety and regulation. Those who required certification for their builds tended to be more informed, others had a personal interest in safety so had a greater understanding of regulations.

Certifications were not generally required by non-specialists, but those who did receive certification felt that it was a reassuring document which is useful for both insurance purposes and if they wish to sell their property in the future and have assurances of the safety of the work completed.

Non-specialists tend to search for solutions for specific safety issues rather than build a wider knowledge of safety regulations. Participants commented that they often struggle to find information regarding safety online, language is often aimed at specialists rather than the general public and is often spread across different online pages. With this in mind, some participants suggested that an online site with consolidated information would be welcome.

The construction process: Planning phase

Planning involvement

Participants in this study undertook a range of planning activities, starting right from the onset of the works that they were planning to deliver. Some sketched out plans in their mind, others on paper, others using computer software.

Some spoke with friends or family with experience in construction or architecture during the planning phase, to build a picture of what a realistic build would look like and what construction materials may be needed. Others consulted their partner during the planning phase, ensuring that their views were considered.

"I'd worked it out all myself, just literally within a quarter of an hour of walking into this house and looking around I knew exactly what I was going to do." (67, Male, Insulating the floorboards, bathroom refitting)

"I was quite involved [with the planning], my husband is an architect, so he did all the drawings himself, so it was more a case of what do you think about this? Or how do you feel about this? But I think because he knew what practically could be done, and how it would need to be done" (53, Female, Taking down/erecting internal walls)

"In my past work life I was a planning engineer and a project manager, so I know all about planning, but in this case, that wasn't what I needed, because a plan is a fairly dry document. Once you start a plan it's changed anyway, so the vision is what drove me and the vision allowed me to make decisions as I went if something didn't seem or feel right. " (68, Male, Taking down/erecting internal walls, Outdoor office room)

Despite planning many found that plans needed to be adjusted during the build, so ad-hoc planning was also conducted to address problems which arose. Others were more flexible around plans and completed tasks based on time constraints or availability of materials.

"I had to do a lot of research, I thought it would just be in terms of planning how I wanted it to look, but then it ended up being a lot more because I didn't realise we'd have to strip back the carpets and the flooring and the tiles to make the wall fit properly on the floor. I didn't realise we'd have to go up into the ceiling and loft and make sure everything was safe there. So, there was a lot of research that I had to do before I could start because it was a little bit more involved than I thought." (30, Female, Taking down/erecting internal walls)

"Even though I've seen things in theory, sometimes when you come to do it the reality is quite different. Like with the wall and the driveway, I didn't expect to find a whole other wall behind it and then I thought, 'Oh, well what if this is something to do with the water main for the street?' What if this is a drain? What if it's something important? What if it's a septic tank?' So it was like, 'Oh, oh no. Have I started something massive now? Is this a small job that's now turned into a huge job?' (40, Female, Garden Wall)

"We don't have like a fixed plan it has been very flexible. Like I say depending on what resources we have on each day and how much time we've got and occasionally just what strikes our fancy" (37, Male, Taking down/erecting internal walls)

Involvement in the planning phase ensured that the non-specialists' tastes and budget were met, as they were involved in decision making around style and products.

"I spent a lot of time pouring over different things, looking at prices, looking at different designs and how they'll all fit together." (37, Male, Taking down/erecting internal walls)

"[I plan] so that I can save time and money for myself. So that I could keep things within budget." (36, Male, Taking down/erecting internal walls)

Planning knowledge

Non-specialists conducted extensive research on their build to increase their knowledge of the construction process. Knowledge was built through previous experience, planning before the build, or when addressing issues during the build. Some also relied upon the knowledge of their partners or their friends and family.

"I did quite a lot of research into what products would work for us, and the building, and, like, the fact that we've got damp, and what would be the best material to use." (30, Female, Moved kitchen, renovating sitting room, render repair and chimney)

"So, I work in health and safety for a large university, so I do look at a lot of things involving construction works. I have to go and do site inspections and things. I also have health and safety qualifications in construction. Also, my dad, he built an extension to our property when I was a teenager, I helped him out a lot with that. And I've just always done what I can with DIY, if I get stuck there's always YouTube videos." (40, Female, Garden Wall)

"I do have a cousin who does building, and construction work and we did get him just to come out and have a look and we talked him through what our ideas were, just to see if they were feasible or not and he agreed that it was doable, but he wasn't involved in the construction process. It was just at the idea stage." (30, Female, Taking down/erecting internal walls)

Planning permission was generally not needed by participants in this study. Most non-specialists interviewed commented that their plans were made to ensure they need not go through the planning permission process (as this can be limiting and time consuming). However, some required planning permission, this tended to require a visit from the council during construction or input from the council when drawing up plans, which would lead to adjustments being made.

Non-specialists commented that if their construction had required planning permission, then they would have employed a professional contractor. However, it is worth noting that for those who did require planning permission, the cost was the key reason for carrying out the work themselves and not employing a contractor. Requiring permission was not a

significant barrier in their situation, however, a few did choose to limit their work in a way that would ensure that they would not have to seek permission.

"Everything was kind of spec'd out to minimise the need to have to either request planning permission." (48, Male, Taking down/ erecting internal walls)

"When we planned the small extension, we did speak to the council about how far back we could go and they said we wouldn't need one within a certain amount of obviously, distance. So, we just kept within that limit, so we didn't need one." (30, Female, Taking down/erecting internal walls)

"Due to the size of it, we had to submit for full planning. Then we had the building control come out at different stages of the build to make sure that it was being passed. So we were very much involved, and in touch with the planning office." (46, Female, Extension Work)

"I did look at the planning portal, and through work I've done a little bit, like, I sometimes work myself with contracts and a planning team. So a little bit of understanding around planning, but then most of that is just government websites or the council website. And I did speak to South Gloucester planning officers as well." (30, Female, Moved kitchen, renovating sitting room, render repair and chimney)

A case study from a non-specialist is included in the next page of the report, this includes details on the planning phase of their construction².

² Three case studies have been included in this report, all names have been pseudonymised.

Case study 1

Jane – Female, 30, Taking down/erecting internal walls, plastering and skimming

Knowledge, Involvement and Challenges

Jane's first home meant a lot to her, so she was very engaged in the planning. Cost consideration led her to take on many DIY tasks as most of her budget was spent on buying the house. Although initially she was unfamiliar with the process of DIY, she diligently researched and carried out small extension work. She constructed a new stud wall to create a partition between the bedrooms and hallway and only involved the labourers to give her project the final finishing touch. Many of her friends, who were knowledgeable in this field and people who had recently carried out a DIY at their home pointed her in the right direction. Jane faced challenges with both time and money. She believes that with a larger budget, her home could have matched her vision of a dream house. Nevertheless, she is content with how her home has turned out.

"I'm a little bit of a perfectionist. So, I didn't really trust that anybody would do it exactly how I wanted. So, I thought it's better if I just do it myself."

"I thought it would just be in terms of planning how I wanted it to look, but then it ended up being a lot more because I didn't realise we'd have to strip back the carpets and the flooring and the tiles to make the wall fit properly on the floor. So, there was a lot of research that I had to do before I could start because it was a little bit more involved than I thought."

Product Knowledge and Priorities

Regarding construction products, Jane had limited awareness and only focused on products that were relevant to her project. In general, her knowledge in this area was limited. Her main priorities while buying any materials were affordability and durability. She wanted materials to be cheap but long lasting. When it came to safety, she relied entirely on the expertise of the professional selling the materials. When selecting products, she had doubts about whether seller provided her with the correct items. Given her lack of expertise in this area, she was not confident that the seller fully understood her needs or if her explanations were sufficient to ensure that she was buying the right materials.

"I did ask him (seller) at the time I said, 'You wouldn't be selling it in this country if it didn't pass the safety laws in this country.' And he said, yes, but then obviously you get what you pay for... we just trusted what the professionals were advising."

Safety, Regulations, and Improvements

Jane did not have much knowledge on any safety regulations or any certifications, but when the council informed her that certifications were not necessary within certain boundaries, she proceeded with the construction. For any knowledge or information, she relies on the UK government website and feels there should be more transparency when it comes to any product. She feels that more rigorous testing of the products and fewer choices would enhance her sense of safety and security in selecting the products. The massive variety of products in the market made it challenging for her to conduct thorough research. Additionally, she suggests a shift towards fewer products being available online and more being offered offline, as this would provide her with a greater selection of more solid and reliable options.

"Once we'd got the confirmation that our work didn't need a permit or anything, we went ahead and did it. In terms of the individual products that we used, the materials, we did check obviously that they are safe enough to be used and they are commonly used, but I didn't go into the details about their safety, no."

The construction process: Construction phase

Motivation and experience

Non-specialists in this study had either completed or were near the end of the construction process. For some this process was short, lasting only 1 month, for others the process had lasted years, having experienced delays or other unexpected issues which extended original timelines. Issues and delays faced included lack of availability of materials, materials not arriving in time, issues with contractors originally leading the work or issues with plumbing or electricity.

"We started the work a week before lockdown and it's still ongoing, although we should be finished in the next month or two" (35, Female, Extension work, loft conversion, Garden wall, Taking down/erecting internal walls)

"I think generally speaking the things that have been most frustrating all along have been to do with availability of stuff." (62, Male, Replacement of doors, sockets, and lights)

Cost saving was the largest motivator for non-specialists, completing construction themselves meant that they could save on the significant costs of labour. The increase in the cost of living has increased the cost of materials were also motivating factors.

Non-specialists often picked materials themselves as a cost saving measure, which also ensured they could have control of the materials being used or to source materials themselves from reasonable suppliers, rather than rely on contractors.

"It was just after Covid, I think the price of things has gone up, the price of labour has gone up, the price of raw materials has shot through the roof, so everything was just so much more expensive than it had been before. And by doing a lot of the work ourselves, so things like the tiling, the insulation, the decorating, doing this, we managed to probably bring it in at half what we were quoted from a builder." (53, Female, Taking down/erecting internal walls)

"With this project, it was to cut down some of the cost, because replacing the whole bathroom is going to cost thousands. We're looking at maybe £6000. So, doing the wall myself saved employing someone. So, that made quite a big saving, and also, you just get the sense that you've actually managed to do something yourself" (56, Male, Taking down/erecting internal walls)

Non-specialists were also motivated by the lack of availability of labour, some commented that they were unable to employ a tradesperson for the dates that they needed, and others stated that previous negative experiences with tradespeople made them less likely to employ one again. These negative experiences including poor standards in the construction or the purchase of cheaper materials than were paid.

"We did at the beginning contact a couple of companies for quotes on how much it would be to do the work and apart from being expensive, they also had really long waiting times. So, it was also probably just going to be quicker if we did it ourselves." (30, Female, Taking down/erecting internal walls)

"There's always a concern from a tradesperson point of view because you rely and expect them to be there when you need them. If they don't, if they're not there when you need them, when you've agreed the time, attendance and all the rest of it, or what their timescales are then it can cause a problem because if we do anything, we want it done and dusted as quickly as possible. It doesn't always work out that way. " (64, Male, External yard wall and new wooden door)

As previously mentioned, some were motivated to conduct the work themselves after poor previous experiences with contractors or tradespeople. Others had previously conducted DIY work in their homes and felt confident in their skills or had support from friends and family with experience in construction.

"I decided to open up the loft, do a loft conversion, so I got a firm of builders in and they did the structural work okay, but when it came to finishing, they were awful. So, I sacked them and finished up doing most of the finishing myself. " (68, Male, Taking down/erecting internal walls, Outdoor office room)

"I think maybe the cost is obviously a huge factor. I think there's also, if you can do a job yourself, I think sometimes there's a case you'll at least as good a job and if you don't do it very perfectly, well you haven't paid somebody an awful lot of money to do things no better than you would." (43, Male, Full Renovation)

Non-specialists also mentioned their personal curiosity in construction, many worked in adjacent roles like an estate agent or artists or had skills or other skills which could be utilised during construction.

"Well, I love using my hands and I love trade, anything to do with making,' and I'm a graduate of sculpture, using wood and tools. The only thing I've used it [my degree] for strangely enough is DIY." (46, Female, Extension Work)

Others were more motivated by their personalities, multiple non-specialists commented that they were 'perfectionists' and that involvement in the construction process ensured that they would be able to have oversight over all decisions about their home.

Some also commented that they wanted to have 'control' over the build, deciding exactly how they wanted their homes to look and feel, and having the 'satisfaction' of completing a large-scale build.

"[Motivation for DIY] Being in control, satisfaction of doing it yourself, and more than anything, being able to change things as you go along." (62, Male, Replacement of doors, sockets, and lights)

"I think I get a sense of satisfaction from doing things in and of myself. I think there's an assumption that women can't do these things, it's nice sometimes to reject that assumption and show that you can do these things." (40, Female, Garden Wall)

"I'm a little bit of a perfectionist. So, I didn't really trust that anybody would do it exactly how I wanted. So, I thought it's better if I just do it myself." (30, Female, Taking down/erecting internal walls)

"Main thing is financial, secondary motivation's probably just having a vested interest in your home, as opposed to a house. So being a part of the fabric of the property." (48, Male, Taking down/erecting internal walls)

Building knowledge and confidence

Confidence is often built from previous experiences in their home, or through seeking advice from friends and family in the construction industry.

Whilst some build their knowledge and confidence before the build others prefer to learn in a more ad-hoc way often to address an unexpected challenge. Knowledge is often built through individual research, some are reliant on books or guides online, including WikiHow, although most are particularly reliant on YouTube, as there are resolutions for a range of issues in a format which is accessible for all.

"The amount of detailed stuff, that is very well explained on YouTube, you can learn an awful lot of skills and find out the best ways to do things" (43, Male, Full Renovation)

"Different parts of it have got different levels of knowledge. Electricals, for example, my father was in electronics, so he taught me to use a soldering iron at the age of four. So, electrics, no worries. It's been a challenge learning about the walls here because some of them are plasterboard, some of them are lathe and plaster, and lathe and plaster have challenges that I'm totally not used to." (62, Male, Replacement of doors, sockets and lights)

"I go on to supplier's websites and things like that, DIY websites, and just sort of read, not the products but the methods." (62, Male, Replacement of doors, sockets and lights)

"I've got a DIY book that I sometimes refer to as well, it's just Collins DIY Manual, so sometimes I'll just look at that. When I'm going to rebuild the wall I'm definitely going to watch some YouTube videos on bricklaying. I do have a friend who he's also quite handy, so if I get really stuck sometimes, I'll call him and do a video call and ask him what he thinks I should do." (40, Female, Garden Wall)

Others ask friends or family for their advice if they worked in or around the construction industry or ask for advice from suppliers or in stores such as Wickes and B&Q.

"I know I had a wealth of information at my fingertips in the fact that I could ask my dad, various other people who've worked in the industry, and are generally retired now." (37, Male, taking down/erecting internal walls)

"I have got books on DIY up there, I have spent hours watching YouTube videos. But again, just family because we have got so many relatives in the trade, you know, I will text and just go, 'If you have a day off could you just come around?' I won't get them to do it, I like to be told how to do it and then be supervised. " (28, Male, Extension work, garden wall, complete house renovation)

"YouTube is brilliant for bits and pieces like that and, like, laying the self-levelling screed on the floor for example, I Googled which ones to use or how to do it and information is all there. " (54, Male, Outdoor office room)

"I'd say I'm knowledgeable to a point. I don't think I would like to build a brick wall without getting someone who I know is a bricklayer to come and look it over beforehand" (51, Male, Extension work, Garden wall, taking down/erecting internal walls)

Non-specialists also build knowledge and confidence through 'trial and error' or from 'testing their limits'. Some commented that they previously had 'incidents' which meant that they would not attempt some tasks again.

"I think I know where my limits are, I think that's probably the fairest thing to say. So, I know if there is a job that needs to be done and I'm not too sure, I know I won't try and do it myself. So, a lot of it is quite new to me, like, fitting doors and stuff like that I have never done, but it's easy enough to learn." (28, Male, Extension work, garden wall, complete house renovation)

"I think there's a little bit of trial and error. I would probably look and see what resources I could find. YouTube is a very good resource for that. There's a lot of detailed quality explanations on a lot of things." (43, Male, Full Renovation)

As previously mentioned, cost saving was a significant factor for non-specialists. Many commented that the rise in cost of living alongside the rise in cost of materials also a key factor for undergoing work and investing time into knowledge and confidence around construction.

"I'm quite keen on learning not to just go for the traditional methods and what would work best and save us money in the longer term." (30, Female, Moved kitchen, renovating sitting room, render repair and chimney)

"I found that I had enough time to start engaging with these projects. So, for me, it was a case of I had the time and willingness to learn. And another big motivator was money." (36, Male, Taking down/erecting internal walls)

During the process some had lower levels of confidence and therefore employed a tradesperson for a specific job which they could not teach themselves. Some also employed tradespeople when they were concerned about safety, this was most often the case with electrical work in their home.

Others relied on friends and family who were tradespeople to offer their experience and knowledge, to ensure that the build was correct.

"Only from a cost saving perspective, I'm just trying to keep costs as low as possible. And if it's something that I think I can do myself I just tend to do it myself rather than pay somebody. Like, with the plastering I'm going to pay for a plasterer to do that because I'm no good at plastering, sometimes you've just got to pay for someone, haven't you?" (40, Female, Garden Wall)

"Most of the DIY stuff that we've gone and done is mostly ourselves. The only things that we won't attempt are outside or from a safety perspective. For example, electrician, we won't touch electrics for obvious reasons, plumbing we won't attempt because I've made one or two mistakes in the past and I've learned by them, so I don't do them anymore." (64, Male, External yard wall and new wooden door)

"I normally feel quite confident, I'm quite happy to take on most things. I know there are some things I'm not very good at doing, plastering is one of them" (71, Male, Garage, Electrical installation work)

"I've got some friends who are like, sort of, handymen. So, they pointed me in the right direction in terms of where to get the right materials from and then when I went to visit the wholesalers, they were able to tell me exactly what I needed in terms of materials." (30, Female, Taking down/erecting internal walls)

Some non-specialists had safety concerns during their build, due to their lack of knowledge and confidence in certain aspects of construction. However most had trust that the products they were purchasing through trusted suppliers would be safe.

"With taking down that chimney, we were worried and of course we didn't get a formal structured opinion, it was just from my friend who'd not assessed it, so I was worried about that, but then we do try and manage the risk of it and think sensibly about it, so that was one of, that's the main safety thing." (37, Female, Taking down/erecting internal walls)

"The door, for instance, has a British Standard door. They're, kind of, bought from places trades go or B&Q or something like that. I don't think we've done anything that is not following the planning or chose a suspicious material or anything." (30, Female, Moved kitchen, renovating sitting room, render repair and chimney)

Product knowledge and choice

Product knowledge and priorities

The non-specialists in this study had mixed levels of product knowledge, which was often dependent on their previous experience of construction process, as well as their level of research. Those who had did not have any previous experience with construction, usually only had knowledge about the products that were relevant to the work they were carrying out. Understanding of products was generally important, as many wanted to make sure that they are buying suitable, good quality materials.

"If I've used [the product] in the jobs that I've done then I might know a bit, but other than that it's a bit of finger in the air for me. I do my research as and when I need it ... I'm learning as I go." (32, Female, Loft conversion)

"I know which product to use where, although I always want to see if there's an innovation." (68, Male, Taking down/erecting internal walls, Outdoor office room)

"I only know what was relevant to my project, but I don't know about anything else, or what's out there." (30, Female, Taking down/erecting internal walls)

"If just went in to buy a pack of nails, then I'm probably not going to look that much into it, but if it was something that I need to last a length of time, then [the product knowledge] would be [important]." (32, Female, Loft conversion)

In general, most non-specialists obtained some understanding of products and materials prior and during the construction process, and most invested time into researching the products. Online research was often supplemented by seeking advice. Many had friends and family that were more knowledgeable or worked in the industry, however, those who didn't, sought advice and information from retailers.

"We weren't that knowledgeable, a lot of research online, a lot of speaking to builders' merchants as well and just relying on their feedback." (46, Female, Extension Work)

"[We got] a lot of guided advice from friends in the industry." (29, Male, Taking down/erecting internal walls)

"You learn as you go along, just by doing a bit of research online." (62, Male, Replacement of doors, sockets, and lights)

"My stepdad would tell me what's good quality and what's not." (36, Female, Extension work, Outdoor office room)

"I'll do my research on a product, but quite often I'm quite happy to go to the builders' merchants and just say, 'Look, this is what I need doing. What do you recommend for it?'" (37, Male, Taking down/erecting internal walls)

When purchasing the products, non-specialists mostly balanced cost with quality and would buy less expensive products only if they could ensure that quality is not compromised. For most, quality often meant durability and longevity, and many preferred buying products that were from well-known brands and had positive customer reviews.

Environmental factors were important for some, however, this was more common with regards to the long-term saving of energy costs, such as investing in products with good insulation qualities. Aesthetic was also important for many; however, most would try to balance that with the cost and quality. There were no spontaneous mentions of safety, however, when probed, most generally mentioned that they assumed safety when buying from bigger, well-known brands.

“Quality [and], the price has to be low, but not the lowest. I like it to be a good value, but the lowest probably isn't the best product.” (48, Male, Outdoor office room)

“I think finance is definitely one of the biggest things, but long-term quality and environmental impact are certainly factors.” (43, Male, Full Renovation)

“Often I was looking at the energy ratings or what we could gain from using a certain product to reduce our energy bills.” (30, Female, Moved kitchen, renovating sitting room, render repair and chimney)

“We are very keen on energy efficiency and trying to be green So, any products we are buying ... we look at that information to try and keep down energy costs. And then, [looking at] the overall cost [of the product] as well.” (56, Male, Taking down/erecting internal walls)

To not compromise the quality of materials that were used in the structural work, some non-specialists said they tried to save costs on products that were used for non-structural elements, such as erecting a stud wall or other decorative elements. Others would also shop around to see if they could purchase the materials they had in mind from other places, such as online marketplaces.

“Cost becomes less important for things that are going to last a long time ... My plasterboard for my ceiling, I will probably get either the mid-range or the more expensive plasterboard because it's going to be up there a long time ... Whereas I wasn't so bothered about the bricks.” (40, Female, Garden Wall)

“The stud wall because that's an internal wall in the house, we weren't too bothered about that ... the external work like the small extension that we built, because that's external and it's going to have to be weatherproof ... we just wanted something that wasn't too expensive but also, we wouldn't have to replace for a long time.” (30, Female, Taking down/erecting internal walls)

Purchasing process

Most commonly, non-specialists bought products from builders' merchants and other retailers, including Screwfix, B&Q, Toolstation, Travis Perkins, Costco, Dulux, Howdens, Wren, Wickes, Jewson and Selco.

Before purchasing products, most non-specialists would often research the product information online, compare the prices and would look at the product reviews to ensure they were getting quality products. The online sources that they used included product specifications, quality marks, as well as information gathered from online forums, where others shared their experiences of using the products. Many would also seek advice from family, friends, or retailers, especially if they wanted to get more information about the products or felt that online advice was not sufficient in helping them understand which products were best or most appropriate for the work they were carrying out.

"I wouldn't say it's a definite process, but generally, I would do some research online first, because it means I don't need to keep going to different stores ... If I need more information, then I can ask the store themselves." (48, Male, Outdoor office room)

"I'll look for British standard marks and man behind the counter if he's knowledgeable. And also, what I've read and what I know. I've got friends in the construction industry whom I ask. It's all of those really." (71, Male, Redecorating dining space with plasticine ceiling, smoke alarms, new flooring, walls)

"Sometimes there's not enough information, and with these sorts of products you need to the exact specification, you need to know exactly how it works, or the size, or the materials, and sometimes there's just very little information ... and you have to ring up, ask questions, find out a little bit more." (53, Female, Taking down/erecting internal walls)

"[I was] generally tapping into online knowledge more than what was said on the goods." (37, Male, Taking down/erecting internal walls)

There were different levels of satisfaction with the information and advice that non-specialists obtained when researching products. In general, those who were able to get advice from the professionals, or friends and family with experience in the industry, along with carrying out their own online research, were more confident that they are purchasing suitable products. However, others who did not have access to advice from those they trusted, were less experienced, and relied solely on the advice online or the retailers, had less confidence in whether the information they had was correct. Many were apprehensive about trusting the advice they get from the retailers, as some were concerned that the retailers would only want to sell specific products, rather than advise on products that were best for them. Some also felt that whilst they were given enough information about the product specifications, they were not always sure whether they were given enough information about how certain products could compare to others, as well as whether there are any environmental or any other implications of using the specific products. A few noted that they would find it useful having more detailed instructions and specifications on the products or the manufacturers website.

"They tell you obviously all the facts and stuff about the actual product as in the spec. But not about the environmental impacts and how that's going to affect things later down the line." (32, Female, Loft conversion)

"I was never sure if what they were selling me is because they wanted to hit targets or they wanted to make the sales or if they fully understood the project that I was working on." (30, Female, Taking down/erecting internal walls)

"I think the hardest part for people doing DIY ... is getting the information that you need and having it somewhere that you can trust because it's very, very difficult." (53, Male, New flooring)

"I've found the information, myself, out, before I buy it. If I just turned up at the shop, I don't think they'd give me the right information at all." (40, Female, Garden Wall)

Safety concerns

There was often an assumption among non-specialists that products from reputable brands and retailers would conform to standards, which meant that they mostly had no safety concerns. Others had awareness that the products would need to conform to standards if they needed to get approval from the building regulations. However, those who did not have to get building regulations involved, generally felt that as long as they purchased products from reputable sellers that were suitable for the work they were carrying out, the products would be safe to use.

"I make an assumption that if it's for sale in the UK, it will conform to basic standards." (62, Male, Replacement of doors, sockets, and lights)

"I obviously assume that if you buy something it's going to be fit for purpose ... but then I've never really had to do anything that's large enough that ensures that you need to adhere to any." (54, Male, Outdoor office room)

"If it's something like a certain type of material of beam that we need going through the ceilings ... they would specify what material and what thing it needs to be." (35, Female, Extension work, loft conversion, Garden wall, taking down/erecting internal walls)

"I mean I know there are building standards, and again it wasn't something I'd particularly concern myself with because I was buying from reputable places. It wasn't a concern because I didn't see them being able to sell anything that wasn't up to standards." (37, Male, Taking down/erecting internal walls)

"It would be important if we were doing something that had a standard to it ... whatever we were doing wasn't going to be hugely weight bearing, or sometimes perhaps we assumed it was a standard, I guess. But we didn't look into that, so it was partly assumed, but if we were doing anything bigger, for example if we were buying a steel girder, we would check that." (37, Female, Taking down/erecting internal walls)

In general, most non-specialists did not have safety concerns, as they often felt they were given enough information and advice either through research, or through family and friends. Those who were concerned about the safety, it was with regards to using the products correctly and installing them in a way that would not cause any safety issues. Where this was a concern, they would make sure they were getting enough advice about the correct products and the installation.

"I was really concerned ... [about] how to seal some of the pipes. So, I was really careful when I went into the shop to show them exactly what I needed and how I was going to do

it. Because the information I got on the internet wasn't that reliable and so I wasn't that confident.” (56, Male, Taking down/erecting internal walls)

“I didn't have any concerns with [the window] really, apart from it had been dismantled and we have to refit it back together.” (43, Male, Extension work)

Others were concerned about the long-term implications of using certain products and felt they did not have enough information about the standards, as well as the sustainability and quality of products.

“I think as a DIY-er, there should be better information to make sure that I'm told what specifications I should be meeting or what the standards should be because [in] so many cases you can get these amateur do it yourself-ers that effectively do a bodge job and then the house gets sold and the people that buy the place are left with a major problem.” (71, Male, Garage, Electrical installation work)

“A couple of the bricks that we'd bought had crumbled on delivery. So, I wasn't sure how safe they would be in terms of durability ... I just have to trust that what [the delivery person] saying is true because I don't know any different. So, yes, I was worried about the safety of that, but he'd explained that it's normal and they could replace it.” (30, Female, Taking down/erecting internal walls)

“I don't know about safety concerns, but with some of the construction work ... the steel was put in the wrong place ... and the roof joists ... [so] that had to be redone. But I think it's been more quality and sustainability rather than safety.” (53, Female, Taking down/erecting internal walls)

A case study from a non-specialist is included in the next page of the report, this includes details on their product knowledge and choice.

Case study 2

John – Male, 67, garden wall extension, fencing, flooring and insulation

Knowledge, Involvement and Challenges

John mentioned that the moment he moved into the house last year, he knew what he had to do in terms of construction. Given his prior background assisting with DIY projects and his employment in a construction firm, he had an idea of what he wanted to do and knowledge on how to do it. His brother's expertise as a builder also provided him some valuable support throughout the construction journey. Cost played an important role in his decision for carrying out a DIY alongside his confidence, having previously completed construction work.

"A lot of it (knowledge) has just been watching people and starting it myself."

"I'd worked it out all myself, just literally within a quarter of an hour of walking into this house and looking around I knew exactly what I was going to do."

Product Knowledge and Priorities

When it comes to product knowledge, John had good knowledge about the products he bought for his home due to his prior experience of carrying out DIY construction work. He emphasised that he values quality above all else, believing that high-quality materials tend to have greater durability. Safety-wise, getting the right material was his priority. He worked on making sure that the floorboard and the new front door is of good quality and safe, and the solar and batteries used for cavity insulation have certifications. For him, it was fine to spend some extra money on buying good quality products. Through his extensive preplanning and research, he believed to have acquired the right products for his home, which eliminated the need for any external consultations while buying products.

"It has to be fit for purpose and safe. You know, when I've done building work for other people, I've seen some really horrendous. And dangerous, very dangerous. So, I'm always quite conscious of safety aspects."

Safety, Regulations, and Improvements

John was confident in his extensive knowledge and experience with building inspectors. He ensured he had proper documentations and certificates for his completed projects for example, solar panels and batteries for the cavity installations. Furthermore, he always checks for safety marks and certifications that are compliant with building regulations when purchasing products. Looking to the future, John believed that more and more people will turn to YouTube videos to learn about construction and to carry out a DIY, however they may not have prior knowledge of the products they are working with which is a potential risk involved.

"If people haven't got any idea of what they're doing, 'Oh, we watch YouTube videos, we can do this,' yes, you might be able to do it, but if you haven't got the knowledge of what you're doing, it can't be safe."

Improving safety, knowledge, and regulation

Knowledge and importance of safety and regulation

Non-specialists had mixed levels of awareness about safety regulations and legislation, which was generally dependent on the type of work they were carrying out. Those who had limited awareness, felt it was because the work they undertook did not require them to adhere to any regulations or legislation, however, they were aware that certain types of work would require them to do so. Non-specialists who had higher levels of awareness about regulations and legislation, mostly felt that it was limited to the specific work they were carrying out and did not feel confident in their knowledge of standards and regulations more generally.

“Not massively knowledgeable. I know the building regulations for the things that we wanted doing.” (36, Female, Extension work, Outdoor office room)

“Regulations not necessarily quite so much [knowledge], because I'm not a commercial person, so Health and Safety at Work Act doesn't apply to somebody who is doing work for themselves. In terms of finished product ... I will make sure I'm using the right cable, for example.” (62, Male, Replacement of doors, sockets, and lights)

Most of those who sought out information about regulations and legislation, either did so through their own research, advice from friends and family, or advice from building regulations. However, a few mentioned that they had awareness of regulations either due to their previous experience conducting DIY projects, or because they worked in industries where knowledge about health and safety of materials and work processes was relevant, and which they could apply to construction.

“I wouldn't feel confident, it is something that I would have to look up and ask some questions.” (53, Female, Taking down/erecting internal walls)

“I know exactly, you know, in terms of the construction process, what safety marks, what needs to be signed off and at which stage.” (46, Female, Extension Work)

In general, the knowledge that non-specialists had about the regulations and legislation was often surrounding the work that required building controls, or work that required certification, including electrics and plumbing. Some also mentioned health and safety when it came to the construction process, and a few mentioned looking for products that would adhere to safety standards, where it was relevant to the work they carried out.

“I think definitely working with electrics, regulations have changed. So, some years ago you could do things in your own home and tackle electrical things. Now, I think it's far more clear that really you shouldn't do anything at all.” (56, Male, Taking down/erecting internal walls)

“The parts I've read, [I feel] reasonably knowledgeable ... They do change often. So, the next time I do a similar project I will re-read them.” (48, Male, Outdoor office room)

“I wouldn't say I'm knowledgeable in that sense, but depending on the work that we were thinking about doing, then the kind of questions we would ask and the kind of guidance we would seek would be from the right bodies.” (64, Male, External yard wall and new wooden door)

The certifications that non-specialists received were mainly regarding the building controls as well as other work, such as plumbing, gas and electrics. In general, receiving certifications was important for most, either for their own reassurance that the work has been done properly, or because they wanted to make sure that if they were looking to sell the house in the future, they would have the necessary certifications in place. A few also mentioned that it would be important to have the certifications for insurance and as a matter of precaution in case if anything went wrong.

“It's important because when you come to sell [the house], it's necessary that the people buying know that it has been done correctly, and safely, and properly.” (53, Female, Taking down/erecting internal walls)

“If you are going to sell your house, I think [having certifications] just makes the whole process a lot easier.” (51, Male, Extension work, Garden wall, taking down/erecting internal walls)

“We wanted to have it done properly. So, I'm quite conscious of how things are security-wise, more through stories of other people's incidents and problems with having to claim on insurance and it being DIY work.” (28, Male, Extension work, garden wall, complete house renovation)

“I have an expectation that if I have someone in the house doing something that I think requires [a certification], then I would expect that they are working to the current standards and provide me with the relevant certificates.” (64, Male, External yard wall and new wooden door)

When searching for information regarding safety and regulations, most said that they would either use Google as their first point of search or would use government websites. Others said would rely on the advice and information from the building regulations, or their local council, as well as any other regulatory bodies, if it was relevant. Some mentioned they would look at a range of websites that provide this information, however, would also ensure that the information provided is legitimate. Regarding the safety of products, some said they would also look for information on the suppliers' websites.

“I'm afraid my go-to search engine will always probably be Google and then filter that to make sure that the information I'm getting is relevant.” (71, Male, Garage, Electrical installation work)

“I had to, kind of, search about building regulations and it all linked with our local council. So, they had really useful information about building regulations and what you needed and what you didn't need.” (56, Male, Taking down/erecting internal walls)

“The building regulations are a key one if you're doing anything, you need to know what's allowed and what's not allowed ... I know pretty much where to go to look for most of the

things and I can do a quick search, if I'm unsure, just to find out if there are any regulatory bodies that I need to be aware of.” (68, Male, Taking down/erecting internal walls, Outdoor office room)

“I suppose I'd probably again go straight to a government site; government sites have a lot of advice about a lot of things like this, but I'm assuming there's probably a construction body that deals with a lot of this specifically ... So, I'd maybe look for something like that to go into a bit more detail.” (32, Female, Loft conversion)

In general, the way non-specialists researched information relating to product use and installation did not differ, and most either referred to their own research, or asked friends and family or other specialists who were more knowledgeable about the products and their use and installation. Furthermore, for participants in the study, knowledge of the building process and associated signoffs was generally better than in relation to product-specific standards.

In terms of improvement of safety standards and regulations of building products, many non-specialists felt that information about standards and regulations often lacked clarity, and that it was generally difficult finding the right information that would be relevant to the work they were carrying out. Many often found the language difficult to understand and confusing, and felt it was aimed at specialists, rather than the general public. Others also mentioned that they would like to see the information collated in one place, in order to ensure that people can easily access it.

“There is a whole heap of information out there, but it is all over the place. I think that would be the only improvement.” (46, Female, Extension Work)

“I think some of the rules and what is acceptable for DIY people to do, needs to be a lot clearer online ... there are going to be more and more people leaning to doing work themselves than paying a professional to come in and do it because of how expensive things are. I just think there needs to be more effort done to make that information easily available.” (28, Male, Extension work, garden wall, complete house renovation)

Some also felt that information was often not readily available when purchasing or researching the products, and that if they wanted to understand more about the standards and regulations, they would have to do their own research. Many would find helpful having such advice more readily available that would include guidance on the types of work or products that require specialists to be involved, or that would fall under certain regulations.

Some were also concerned about the lack of standards and regulations when it comes to DIY work and felt that often people don't do the DIY work up to a good standard, which can cause issues in the long-term.

“Maybe when you're looking online at kitchens, bathrooms, perhaps if there's like a little pop up that comes up saying, 'Don't forget to check with such and such about regulations.' Or perhaps when you go to a DIY store if there's just a little reminder.” (53, Female, Taking down/erecting internal walls)

“People do a lot of DIY [work] and don't know about controls, don't follow any regulations ... I don't know how you get that out to people, adverts on telly, social media.” (48, Male, Outdoor office room)

“I think if there was, like, not necessarily the government website but the website that basically spells out what you are aren't allowed to do...it's quite difficult to get the information of what you're allowed to do.” (54, Male, Outdoor office room)

A case study from a non-specialist is included in the next page of the report, this includes details on their views on the importance of safety and regulation.

Case study 3

James – Male, 62, replacement of Door, sockets and lighting

Knowledge, Involvement and Challenges

James was deeply involved in the entire planning process, taking on most of the tasks himself to ensure they aligned with his preferences and remained within budget. He prioritised product quality over cost and believed that for various aspects of construction, his knowledge levels varied and whenever he needed more information, he would turn to the manufacturer's websites. As for the challenges, his main concerns were availability and timely delivery of the materials which were sometimes very frustrating for him.

"I go on to supplier's websites and things like that, DIY websites, and just sort of read, not the products but the methods."

"If it's a specialist job then yes I will get somebody in. If it's something a tradesman could do or I could do, generally speaking I would do it myself because of the satisfaction of doing it myself, the cost, et cetera. But more to the point, I found it a nightmare to try and find tradesmen."

Product Knowledge and Priorities

James believes that he acquired knowledge and confidence during his DIY project. His primary priorities with products were durability and environment friendliness, with less emphasis on safety due to the absence of children in his house. Nevertheless, he did follow basic safety protocol, including wearing gloves, eye protection, and a mask while working on any part of the house.

"I wouldn't say it's environment, it's more to do with energy saving because of the cost, rather than anything else...I don't have children here, so it's not as if I need to be constant thinking about, not so much is that a sharp edge, but everything has to be obviously, the basics of safety. I mean, when I took out kitchen sockets, I was very surprised to see that some of them didn't even have an earth fitted."

Safety, Regulations, and Improvements

James lacked confidence in his knowledge of safety regulations, particularly because he doesn't consider himself a 'commercial person', making the Health and Safety at Work Act not applicable to him. While he did not need major certifications and documentations for the DIY work that he did, he feels that they are very important, especially for hazardous chemicals. He diligently verifies the safety marks from regulatory bodies for other products. James strongly feels that there should be an improvement in the enforcement of standards, citing the numerous accidents that have occurred in DIY construction projects.

"Well, I don't know whether it's improvements can be made to the standards, I think, but massive improvements could be made to enforcement of them. Yes, there are so many accidents involving DIY and construction, et cetera, but so many times it's because people have not been using them correctly."

Recommendations

This research revealed gaps in knowledge and confidence that OPSS could address:

- Non-specialists in this study commented that they struggle to find information regarding safety online, language is often aimed at specialists rather than the public, furthermore, information is often spread across different online pages. The introduction of a **consolidated online source of information** was suggested by participants who felt it would address current gaps.
- A few participants in this study also noted that they would find it useful to have more **detailed instructions and specifications on the products** or the manufacturers website.
- More detailed **information about the product implications and their use** would also be welcome, including information on the suitability of the product for different types of work. This could include directing individuals to trusted sources where this information can be found.
- Finally, OPSS could consider sharing information about **product regulations** and in what cases the product regulations are applicable and should be considered.

As noted in the 2022 Domestic Clients research further quantitative exploration is needed to give a full picture of drivers and barriers to undergoing construction from different perspectives. We would recommend the following areas to investigate:

- **Contractors' exploration:** We have one point of view in two-way exchange. The contractor's point of view and experience should be considered to understand their own understanding of product safety and installation, and how they behave with clients, to help corroborate findings from both sources.
- **Home-owners survey:** This research was based on a sample of 30 non-specialists, the insights are therefore directional and not representative. A quantitative survey would be needed to put robust numbers behind the findings uncovered so the OPSS can be confident in any future strategy.

Appendix

OPSS x YouGov – non-specialists construction research

Discussion guide for in depth interviews – July 2023

Introduction (2 mins)

Thank you for making the time to participate in this interview. My name is [XXX] and I am calling from YouGov. Thanks for agreeing to talk to me today. As we indicated in our invitation, we are going to be talking to you today about your knowledge and experiences of construction (on behalf of a government department today).

This is an informal discussion, there are no right or wrong answers, and I am here to hear your thoughts and opinions, so please be as open and honest as you feel comfortable with.

The discussion will take approximately 45 minutes. We will audio record the interview for note-taking purposes only – the recording will not be shared with anyone other than YouGov and will be used for internal use only. YouGov will type up anonymised notes from the interview recording which will be used for analysis and report writing. We will not share your contact details with any 3rd parties, and we will secure your personal data securely in line with data protection regulations.

Do you have any questions before we start?

Current construction project (5 mins)

- Firstly, could you tell me a little bit about yourself, your home, and the work you are doing / carrying out in your home?
- When did it start? How long is the work going to take/was taking? When did it finish / should finish?

Moderator to conclude and thank participant if work is not significant or doesn't involve meaningful structural work.

The construction process: involvement, challenges, and choices (10 mins)

Next, let's discuss your involvement in the construction process, along with the challenges and choices you faced....

- How involved were you in the construction planning?
- How involved in the construction process have you been and why – which areas have you been more / less involved in and why?
 - How involved are / were you in the planning?
 - How involved are / were you in the choosing the products?
- Did the construction need planning permission or any other building control notification or approval?
 - If so, how involved were you in the planning permission? How, if at all, does this impact the construction on your home?
- Is involvement with the construction process important to you? Why so? *Probe on which parts; planning, choice, sourcing, and purchase of products (primary vs. fixtures/fittings)*
- How knowledgeable about the construction process do you feel you are? *Probe on design, the process and sign off*
- Did you look to improve your knowledge during or before the build? If so in what areas and why? *Probe on safety and regulations*

- How have you improved your knowledge of DIY construction? *Probe on any resources used or contacts in the construction sector*
- Why did you decide to conduct this construction work by DIY? Is this something you have done before? *Probe on any catalysts*
- Did the cost / cost of living motivate you to undertake DIY construction in your home? How so?
- Did your trust in contractors and tradespeople motivate you to undertake DIY construction in your home? How so?
- Do / did you rely on any external support or advisors (e.g., friends/family/engineer/architect) for the construction? Why so? Did you devolve any decisions to external support or advisors? *Probe on complexity and scale of the task*
- What choices/decisions do you take charge of vs not take charge of, and why?
 - Did you have any concerns about the choices you made when selecting which products to purchase/use, e.g. from a safety risk perspective?
 - *If participant had a design team....* did any member of your design team (architect/engineer) inform you of any possible assumed liability based on a choice/decision?
- What have the biggest challenges of the construction been? This could be before, during or after the work has been done. How did you manage this challenge? *Probe on planning, location, safety, regulation and outcome.*

Construction product knowledge and choice (10mins)

Next let's discuss your knowledge of construction products, including priorities, and your knowledge of safety and regulations of these products...

- How knowledgeable do you feel you are when it comes to construction products? *Probe on understanding the quality of products, what's required where (use), what's safe to use vs not*
- What are/were your top priorities when purchasing construction materials? *Probe on cost, safety and the environment*
- Is knowledge and understanding of construction products important to you? Why/why not?
- During your experience with the construction process, was safety relating to construction products a priority for you? Why/why not? If yes, were there any steps you took to ensure the safety of products?
- Where did you purchase most of your construction products from? Why so?
- What was your process for selecting the products for your construction?
- Did you discuss any products with your external support or advisors? Which ones and why?
- During the shopping process, did you feel you were given enough information on the implication of choice of products?
- Were you aware of certain construction products to conform to standards when it came to purchasing and installation? If so, how did you come about this knowledge? Is there anything you feel is confusing / you still lack knowledge about?
- Do you have any specific safety concerns about the products you purchased or used in your project? If so, what are those concerns/why?

Improving safety, knowledge, and regulation (10 mins)

Finally let's explore your views on safety regulations, including certifications and standards...

- Do you feel confident in your knowledge about the safety regulations / standards and legislation, when it comes to the construction process and product use?
- Have you received any certification regarding the construction/build?
 - If so, what was this certification (*Probe on understanding/purpose of the certification*)?
 - If not, are you aware of what certification a construction might require and from whom?

- How important to you is receiving documentation, guidance, or certifications on your construction? Why/why not?
- Where would you look for information (on the products, retailer's website, or other websites) about safety and regulations related to construction products and/or processes?
Probe around if they would directly engage themselves or at all
- Does the way you research products differ when it comes to how they are used versus how they are installed? *Probe around formal (professionals) vs informal (friends) channels and how this differs for products*
- Do you feel there could be improvements in the safety standards and regulations of building products? If so, why? And how could this be communicated?
- there anything else you'd like to add that we didn't get the chance to cover?

Thank and close.

OPSS DIY Construction x YouGov – Recruitment Screener

July 2023

Sample frame

Date	Sample frame
30 x Online Zoom Interviews 31st July – 18th August	All participants to be ‘non-specialists’ e.g., DIYers currently undergoing construction work or to have conducted construction in their home in the past 12 months. Screen out those employed in the construction sector engaged in the use of construction products. Aim for 20 who have never worked in the construction industry, and 10 who have worked in the construction industry in the past (include a mix of number of years). Mix of expertise and scale / complexity of construction projects e.g., extensions and conversions (all work to be permanent) Mix of age, gender, ethnicity, and region Mix of socio-economic status / income / education level Include those with disabilities

Screener:

[age_pdl] {pdl-update age} (Data already held and updated on the YouGov panel. Potential participants will not be re-asked this question.)

#Recruit a mix

#Screenout below 18

[profile_gender_pdl] {pdl-update profile_gender} (Data already held and updated on the YouGov panel. Potential participants will not be re-asked this question.)

#Recruit a mix

[ethnicity_new_pdl] {pdl-update ethnicity_new} (Data already held and updated on the YouGov panel. Potential participants will not be re-asked this question.)

#Recruit a mix

[profile_socialgrade_cie_pdl] {pdl-update profile_socialgrade_cie} (Data already held and updated on the YouGov panel. Potential participants will not be re-asked this question.)

#Recruit a mix

[profile_GOR_pdl] Which area of the UK do you live in? {pdl-update profile_GOR} (Data already held and updated on the YouGov panel. Potential participants will not be re-asked this question.)

#<1> North East

#<2> North West

#<3> Yorkshire and the Humber

#<4> East Midlands

#<5> West Midlands
 #<6> East of England
 #<7> London
 #<8> South East
 #<9> South West
 #<10> Wales
 #<11> Scotland
 #<12> Northern Ireland
 #<13 if 0> Non UK & Invalid
 #Recruit a mix
 #Screen out if Non UK & Invalid <13>

[profile_education_level_pdl if pdl.profile_education_level.last > months(6)] {pdl-update profile_education_level} #What is the highest educational or work-related qualification you have?

#<1> No formal qualifications
 #<2> Youth training certificate/skillseekers
 #<3> Recognised trade apprenticeship completed
 #<4> Clerical and commercial
 #<5> City & Guilds certificate
 #<6> City & Guilds certificate - advanced
 #<7> ONC
 #<8> CSE grades 2-5
 #<9> CSE grade 1, GCE O level, GCSE, School Certificate
 #<10> Scottish Ordinary/ Lower Certificate
 #<11> GCE A level or Higher Certificate
 #<12> Scottish Higher Certificate
 #<13> Nursing qualification (e.g. SEN, SRN, SCM, RGN)
 #<14> Teaching qualification (not degree)
 #<15> University diploma
 #<16> University or CNA first degree (e.g. BA, B.Sc, B.Ed)
 #<17> University or CNA higher degree (e.g. M.Sc, Ph.D)
 #<18> Other technical, professional or higher qualification
 #<19> Don't know
 #<20> Prefer not to say
 #Recruit a mix

[profile_gross_household_pdl if pdl.profile_education_level.last > months(6)] {pdl-update profile_gross_household}

Gross HOUSEHOLD income is the combined income of all those earners in a household from all sources, including wages, salaries, or rents and before tax deductions. What is your gross household income?

<1> under £5,000 per year
 #<2> £5,000 to £9,999 per year
 #<3> £10,000 to £14,999 per year
 #<4> £15,000 to £19,999 per year
 #<5> £20,000 to £24,999 per year
 #<6> £25,000 to £29,999 per year

#<7> £30,000 to £34,999 per year
 #<8> £35,000 to £39,999 per year
 #<9> £40,000 to £44,999 per year
 #<10> £45,000 to £49,999 per year
 #<11> £50,000 to £59,999 per year
 #<12> £60,000 to £69,999 per year
 #<13> £70,000 to £99,999 per year
 #<14> £100,000 to £149,999 per year
 #<15> £150,000 and over
 #<16> Don't know
 #<17> Prefer not to answer
 #Recruit a mix

[disability_2018_pdl if pdl.disability_2018.last > months(6)] {pdl-update disability_2018}
#Are your day-to-day activities limited because of a health problem or disability which has lasted, or is expected to last, at least 12 months?

#<1> Yes, limited a lot
 #<2> Yes, limited a little
 #<3> No
 #<98> Prefer not to say
 #Recruit a mix

[profile_housing_stat_pdl if pdl. profile_housing_stat.last > months(6)] {pdl-update profile_housing_stat} Which of these applies to your home?

<1> Own the leasehold/freehold outright
 <2> Buying leasehold/freehold on a mortgage
 <3> Rented from local authority
 <4> Rented from private landlord
 <5> It belongs to a Housing Association
 <6> Don't know
 #Screen out if not <1>, <2>, must own home

[construction_employment] Are you currently, or have you previously worked in the construction industry where you have engaged in the use of construction products?

<1> Yes, I am currently employed in the construction industry, where I am engaged in the use of construction products
 <2> Yes, I was employed in the construction industry in the past, where I was engaged in the use of construction products
 <3> No, I have never worked in the construction industry where I was engaged in the use of construction products
 #Screen out if <1>, currently working in construction industry
 #Recruit a mix

[past_employment if 2 in construction_employment] How long ago did you work in the construction industry where you engaged in the use of construction products?

<1> Less than a year ago
 <2> 1-5 years ago
 <3> 6-10 years ago

<4> Over 10 years ago
<5> Not applicable - I have not worked in the construction industry
#Record
#Recruit a mix

[construction1] Are you currently carrying out, or have you carried out any DIY construction work in your home in the last 12 months?

<1> Yes, I am currently carrying out DIY construction work
<2> Yes, I have carried out DIY construction work in the last 12 months
<3> No, I haven't carried out any DIY construction work in my home in the last 12 months
#Screen out if <3>

[construction2] {multiple} What type of DIY construction work are you currently carrying out or have carried out in your home in the last 12 months?

<1> Extension work
<2> Loft conversion
<3> Garage construction
<4> Garden wall construction (involving brick, mortar or concrete)
<5> Taking down or erecting internal walls
<6> Construction of outdoor office room
<7> Other (please specify)
<8 xor> None of the above
#Screen out if <8>

=====

SCREENER OPT-IN

{page opt_in}

YouGov is conducting ****online Zoom interviews**** on the topic of ****DIY construction work****.

We would like to invite you to complete a few short questions (2-4 minutes) to check your eligibility to take part in these interviews. Your responses will be treated in confidence in accordance with the Code of Conduct of the Market Research Society.

Do not worry if you have not done research with us before – we will send you all the details on how to take part, if you are selected.

If you are selected to take part, we are pleased to offer you a ****£30 retail voucher**** as a thank you for your participation.

[screener_opt] Would you be interested in finding out more about this research?

<1> Yes – I want to find out more
<2> No – I want to begin my survey
#Screenout if <2>

{end page opt_in}

=====

EXPRESSION OF INTEREST

YouGov is conducting an ****face to face and online Zoom interviews**** on the topic of ****DIY construction work****. On completion of the interview, we will share ****anonymous insights**** and quotes with our client.

The online interviews will take place between ****Monday 31st July - Friday 18th August**** and will be arranged at a time most convenient for you between ****10.00am - 6.00pm (on week days)****. If selected to take part in the interviews, we would be delighted to offer you a ****£30 retail voucher**** as a thank you for your participation in the full duration of the interview.

On completion of the interview, we will share anonymous insights and quotes with our client. All data collected during the research process will be for internal use, but an anonymised summary of findings may be published.

If you are selected to take part and change your mind about participating, you can withdraw your consent by emailing the YouGov research team at researchconfirmation@yougov.com

[available] Are you interested and available to take part in the interview at the time and date specified?

<1> Yes, I'm interested in and available to take part

<2> No, I'm not interested and/or available to take part

#Screenout if <2>

=====
{page introstart}

We will now ask you some further questions about your eligibility to take part in this research. Please note that completion of this survey ****will not guarantee your selection****, however it will ensure you are shortlisted as a possible participant.

Your YouGov Account will be credited with 25 points for completing the survey.

We have tested the survey and found that, on average it takes around 2-4 minutes to complete. This time may vary depending on factors such as your Internet connection speed and the answers you give.

Please click the forward button below to continue.

{end page introstart}
=====

[awareness_construction] {single} Which of the below statements best describe your confidence and awareness about the construction process you are carrying out:

<1> I am very confident in my awareness about the construction process I am carrying out

<2> I am confident in my awareness about the construction process I am carrying out

<3> I am somewhat confident in my awareness about the construction process I am carrying out

<4> I am not very confident in my awareness about the construction process I am carrying out
<5> I am not at all confident in my awareness about the construction process I am carrying out
#Recruit a mix

[awareness_construction] {single} Which of the below statements best describe your confidence and awareness about the safety implications of the construction products that you are using?

<1> I am very confident in my awareness about the safety implications of construction products I am using

<2> I am confident in my awareness about the safety implications of construction products I am using

<3> I am somewhat confident in my awareness about the safety implications of construction products I am using

<4> I am not very confident in my awareness about the safety implications of construction products I am using

<5> I am not at all confident in my awareness about the safety implications of construction products I am using

#Recruit a mix

[open] {open cols=60 rows=6} Please tell us what DIY construction you are undertaking in your home and what your experience of the process has been so far. Please explain your answer in detail.

#Record

Sample summary

Sample achieved:

No.	Age	Gender	Social Grade	Location	Construction	Detail on construction
1	30	Female	B	South West	Moved kitchen, renovating sitting room, render repair and chimney	Moved the kitchen, including creating alcove in chimney breast for oven, new extractor, Velux windows, insulation, new drainage pipes, underfloor heating, and new external door.
2	43	Male	C1	Scotland	Full renovation of home	Full house renovation of a 1930 bungalow. Constructed new kitchens, bathrooms, flooring, insulating, and decoration.
3	30	Female	D	East Midlands	Taking down/erecting internal walls	Plastering and skimming of every internal wall and ceiling (bungalow). Erection of internal stud wall in a bedroom to section it off from the hallway.
4	67	Male	C1	South East	Insulating the floorboards, bathroom refitting	Lifting the floorboards up in the living room, putting chicken wire between the joists filling, cavity insulation, residual loft insulation, lamination and new boiler set up, solar panel set up
5	37	Male	C1	North West	Taking down/erecting internal walls	Total refurbishing of the house including new kitchen, bathroom, inner walls, tiling and decorating.
6	71	Male	A	East of England	Garage, Electrical installation work	Rehanged the door, electrical wiring, garage modification, fence repairs, brickwork repairs and repointing.
7	37	Female	A	West Midlands	Taking down/erecting internal walls	Taken down wall, which was part of chimney, re-plastering.

8	56	Male	A	South West	Taking down/erecting internal walls	Taken down a partition wall to make the bathroom bigger.
9	53	Female	C1	West Midlands	Taking down/erecting internal walls	Taken down chimney breast and internal walls in bedroom. Raising roof height to make a shower room.
10	62	Male	A	South West	Replacement of doors, sockets, and lights	New sockets and other electrical work, doors also replaced, decoration, sanding floorboards (stain & polish).
11	48	Male	C1	South West	Erecting outdoor office room	Replaced the roof on the garden room, replaced it with a metal profile roof with some PVC skylight panels.
12	54	Male	C2	South East	Erecting outdoor office room	Removal of the shed and then scratch build a corner building to make use of the space. The materials mostly consisted of wood.
13	36	Female	A	North West	Extension work, erecting outdoor office room	Removal of all the interior walls downstairs to open up the area. Also started work building outdoor office.
14	68	Male	A	East of England	Taking down/erecting internal walls, Outdoor office room	Replacement of chipboard flooring with plywood, MDF window boards with solid wood, installation of new electrical sockets, replacement of lighting, refurbish cloakroom, plumbing, electrics, tiling, fitting new toilet, fitting new basin, hanging new doors.
15	32	Female	C1	West Midlands	Loft conversion	Conversion of loft, completed insulation and floorboards.
16	42	Male	E	Northern Ireland	Taking down/erecting internal walls	Partitioning a large outbuilding in four sections, used timbers in his construction process.
17	36	Male	C2	Wales	Taking down/erecting internal walls	Chimney Breast removal and put up a stud wall. Used timber and wood products, for plastering – used watered down PVA mix.

18	43	Male	C1	East Midlands	Extension work	Conversion of a garden into part of the house, to be used as office space. Bricked up the back door, and 1 window. Replaced the remaining window with PVC double glazing. Replaced the plastic roof with tiled roof.
19	48	Female	D	North West	Extension work, loft conversion	Worked on making a single skin breeze block large garage. Installation of 2 windows in, proper insulation, stud wall, flooring had to be raised.
20	71	Male	C2	East Midlands	Redecorating dining space with plasticine ceiling, smoke alarms, new flooring, erecting walls	Redecoration of the dining area. New ceiling, spotlights, fan and smoke alarm, floor and walls and skirting boards. New switches and plastering.
21	28	Male	C1	East Midlands	Extension work, garden wall, complete house renovation	Entire house modernisation and cosmetic work. Each room has been stripped back, which included removal of fitted units/furniture. The house has been fully rewired, plastering, connecting gas, plumbing and kitchen work.
22	64	Male	C2	East Midlands	Erecting garden Walls	Worked on building a small wall to enclose a patio area. Dug out footings and put a concrete foundation in, including laying bricks on that foundation.
23	53	Male	C2	East Midlands	New flooring	Worked on hanging new first floor joists and laying new ground floor cement floor. Used timber, joists, and plasterboards.
24	51	Male	C2	North East	Extension work, Garden wall, taking down/erecting internal walls	Removal and installation of internal walls bricks and stud walls.

25	29	Male	B	West Midlands	Taking down/erecting internal walls	Removed a wall to open up doorway. Removed a brick work to open fireplaces. Erected panelling in hallway and bedroom. Worked on building built-in alcove cabinets. Changed central heating pipe work, removed old plaster and fixed plasterboard.
26	35	Female	D	London	Extension work, loft conversion, Garden wall, taking down/erecting internal walls	Full conversion from a 3-storey town house to 3 apartments, including taking down and erecting walls.
27	64	Male	C1	North East	External yard wall and new wooden door	Worked on removal of garage door, replaced with wood standard size exterior door. New brickwork and concrete lintel, replacement of coping stones.
28	48	Male	A	Scotland	Taking down/erecting internal walls	Worked on internal walls, kitchen plastering, new flooring, window replacement and new room.
29	46	Female	C1	South East	Extension Work	Built a single storey extension with a laundry room and a downstairs WC, and they also plastered some internal walls.
30	40	Female	C2	Yorkshire and the Humber	Erecting garden wall	Taken down a brick garden wall, excavated the earth behind it, and then moved the wall further back.

© Crown copyright 2025

This publication is licensed under the terms of the Open Government Licence v3.0 except where otherwise stated.

To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-governmentlicence/version/3/ or write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk. Where we have identified any third-party copyright information you will need to obtain permission from the copyright holders concerned.

Contact us if you have any enquiries about this publication, including requests for alternative formats, at: OPSS.enquiries@businessandtrade.gov.uk

Office for Product Safety and Standards

Department for Business and Trade, 4th Floor, Multistory, 18 The Priory Queensway, Birmingham B4 6BS <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/office-for-product-safety-and-standards>