



National Baseline Research Into

BLACK AND MINORITISED YOUTH PRESENCE IN THE UK MANUAL TRADES SECTOR

MAY 2022

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**THE
UBELE
INITIATIVE**

ABOUT THE UBELE INITIATIVE

The Ubele Initiative was founded in 2014, following dialogue with African diaspora leaders. Community-rooted and collaborative in character, Ubele focused on effective solutions to persistent social and economic issues. Ubele is taken from Swahili meaning "The Future".

As an African diaspora led, infrastructure plus organisation, we believe in empowering Black and Minoritised communities in the UK to act as catalysts for social and economic change. To achieve this, we work with community leaders, groups, and organisations in the UK and beyond to strengthen their sustainability, resilience, and voice.

We support the growth of individuals and community-based groups and organisations through intergenerational leadership initiatives, capacity support, enterprise, and asset development.

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This report was first published in May 2022 © Ubele 2022

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Citation

If you are using this document in your own writing, our preferred citation is:
Murray, K and Youssef, S (2022), National baseline research into Black and minoritised youth presence in the UK manual trades sector; The Ubele Initiative:
<https://www.ubele.org>

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We wish to gratefully acknowledge the contributions of many individuals who had various roles in the development and implementation of the research. These contributions include establishing the research framework and methodology, including knowledge and experience in the area of research.

Special thanks and appreciation extend to the peer researchers, if not for their interviewing skills and ability to engage participants, we would not have been able to access the many rich reflections that we achieved. We graciously acknowledge their support and assistance: Mojtaba Raeisi, Muhammad Hussain, Warren Davis, Karina Morales, Mahnoor Zara Nasir, Ireoluwakitan Adebayo, Halima Mohamud, Sharon Tamale, Kusheema Nurse and Naomi Robinson.

We thank the young people for their candour and willingness to participate in the process; to lend their voices about their aspiration for the future and, most importantly, the barriers and challenges they foresee within the manual trade sector. Without their cooperation and insights, we would continue to look 'inside' from the 'outside' and speculate.

Our thanks and appreciation go to the Youth Futures Foundation, especially Dilys Winterkorn and Anna Round, who, if not for the financial support, advice and support, this report would not have been possible. It is a start in understanding some of the barriers to accessing the manual trade by young people from Black and minoritised backgrounds. We have made a start in exploring this sphere of the labour market and it is only a start in understanding the needs, future training and employment opportunities within the manual trades sector for young people aged 16 - 24yrs that are from Black and minoritised communities.

Finally, the responsibility for the sense made of the voices that helped to shape our understanding rests with us, the authors. We hope we have not strayed too far from what we have heard.

CONTENTS

	Page
Acknowledgements	2
Executive summary	4
Introduction and context	9
Section 1: Methodological approaches	14
Section 2: Future employment opportunities within the construction and manual trade sector	17
Section 3: What did the research reveal?	25
Conclusion and recommendations	38
References	45
Appendix 1: Methodological approach: data cap	46
Appendix 2: Construction industry occupational map: an overview	50

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Ubele Initiative (Ubele), with support from Youth Futures, was funded to conduct a national baseline analysis of the needs, future training and employment opportunities within the manual trades sector for young people aged 16 – 24yrs that are from Black and minoritised communities [1].

Specifically, the research sought to look at routes that exist to entering the manual trade industry, and, if appropriate, produce a roadmap for Black and minoritised young people to increase employment opportunities within the manual trades. In conducting the research focus was on scoping current opinions, experiences and perceptions of the industry and assessing the challenges faced in entering the industry.

The approach adopted included desk research sitting alongside qualitative and quantitative approaches, using structured 1-2-1 and focus group interviews, survey questionnaire to achieve a wider perspective specifically and more generally across the broader 16 – 64yrs labour cohort. Participants included a cross-section of practicing professionals in the industry as well as young people under the age of 24yrs, especially those who were not sure of their career path post-compulsory schooling. Interviews were conducted with young people who were Bangladeshi, Black African and Caribbean, Eastern European and Pakistani young people aged 16-24 as data shows they are experiencing the highest rates of unemployment.

Based on the approach, 78 people participated in the 1-2-1 and focused group processes supported by an augmented online survey questionnaire that was targeted specifically to young people 16 – 24yrs, from which we received responses from 20 respondents. Additionally, interviews were conducted with practitioners in the manual trade, including training provider (n=10). Taken together, our field research approach engaged 108 participants.

The key questions that the research approaches sought answers to were termed 'primary imperative' questions. In Section 3 we provide evidence from the field research with young people around questions 4 to 6, in particular, with Section 4, capturing reflections against questions 7 to 8. The primary imperative questions were:

1. What does the labour market look like and how are Black and minoritised young people positioned within this?
2. What are the manual trades and why this sector is important in light of the labour market condition?
3. What are the future employment opportunities in this field (i.e. why should we encourage Black and Minoritised young people to go into them)?

[1] Since the murder of George Floyd in May 2020, the debate around the use of the acronym BAME, to refer to 'Black, Asian and Minority ethnic (BAME) has taken on a confusing aura, with a range of people using various labels (unhelpful in most cases) in an attempt to 'regularise and normalise' the labelling of this wider group of people. It is noted that LCF/JPMorgan Chase use the Black and minority ethnic (BME) referent, while others, like BTEG and Ubele, for instance, are starting to use 'Black and minoritised ethnic' (BAME/BME) while others use People of Colour (POC) and 'ethnic minorities' and still further the resurgence of the use of 'Black and Brown' people as references. For the purpose of this piece of work the acronym BME, to refer to Black and minoritised ethnic group, will be used unless there are direct references drawn from reports where the BAME acronym is being used. Under those circumstances, BME and BAME will mean the same thing.

4. What are the routes to entering the manual trade industry (e.g. apprenticeships, training, qualifications, self-employment)?
5. What have been the experiences of Black and minoritised young people entering and working in the manual trade industry? (i.e. work culture, pay, progression etc.)
6. What are the main challenges/barriers impacting on and facing Black and minoritised young people in entering the manual trades?

Alongside these primary questions, considerations were taken of what we termed 'secondary imperative' questions. They were:

7. What policies, initiatives or schemes are in place to increase diversity in the manual trades?
8. What examples are there of good or best practice in the industry?

How do young people enter the manual trade and construction industry?

There are a number of ways to enter manual trade and construction industry. For example, some companies choose to hire entry-level employees without industry-specific training or qualifications and then train them in-house, others require a certain level of initial certification/qualification such as a degree or a registered and approved apprenticeship programme. While these opportunities exist, evidence suggest that construction opportunities were not being taken-up; that is, not enough young people were ready to take them up.

What then are the options open to young people? Other than in-house employment linked to on-the-job-training, the range of policy reforms to the skills training, including Apprenticeship Levy, new apprenticeship standards, new T-level programme and Kickstart, has increased the access to the industry. In broad terms, there are 3 key routes into the manual trades sector:

1. On the job-training:
 - a. Industry apprenticeships;
 - b. Traineeships
 - c. Kickstart
2. Further education and skills and training providers;
3. Higher education/university

What have been the experiences of Black and minoritised young people?

Based on 1-2-1 and focus group sessions, participants observed that the:

- The most common jobs that young people could identify as a manual trade were electrician, plumber, mechanic and builder.
- Young people expressed that these physical jobs (seeing them as manual labour jobs) were very important for society as without them we could not function well.
- Stereotypical views about manual trade workers were evident in responses and during conversations which included comments about those workers being: unintelligent, pre-dominantly white workers, not seen as a glamorous career which will pay them enough and perceived as majority male domain.
- They don't often see themselves within this industry. Even though Black and other minoritised young people knew people who they could relate to – someone like them - within the manual trades industry they still saw it as a predominantly white labour force.

The evidence showed that how young people from Black and minoritised backgrounds perceived their career path into the manual trade and construction industry influenced whether they seek to enter or not. Not only do they have some 'stereotypical views' about the sector as indicated above, but they seem to have a narrow perspective as to options available within the industry and, more critically, they saw the sector as not reflecting people like them. The effect of which is to curtail options with the sector being unattractive.

Through our process of engagement, we learnt that far from a general disinterest in the manual trades there were other factors (or challenges in our parlance) that influenced young people's perception and gravitation into the manual trade industry. Four broad areas of influences were detected:

1. Parental and community influence
2. White-male laddish culture
3. Careers information, advice and guidance
4. Diversity and inclusion practice within the industry

We found:

Parental and community influences

- That the perception of the manual trade industry within the Black and minoritised ethnic communities was not seen as a viable or worthy career path with pressures from family and communities to pursue higher education;
- That, within some families, manual trade was perceived as an alternative option to the more academic and prestigious route of a university degree, thus creating a stigma and myth that 'less educated' people enter the manual trade industry.

White-male laddish culture

- That some young people perceived the work culture of the manual industry to be quite 'laddish' and they couldn't see themselves fitting into this culture (even if they were in an office environment within the industry);
- That some young people felt they would feel uncomfortable about fitting into the work culture within the construction and manual trade industry. This was especially the case amongst those young girls who participated, especially Asian girls;
- That Black and minoritised ethnic background young people lacked social connections, such as family and friends, within the industry compared to their white ethnic counterparts.

Careers information, advice and guidance

- There was a general lack of knowledge around what institutions provide training courses or accreditations for young people seeking to enter the manual trade industry;
- That while young people generally had a good understanding of manual trade workers being highly qualified, they nevertheless indicated that they didn't know where to start with regards to training or where resources could be accessed if they were to consider an opportunity in the manual trade industry (i.e. scholarships or similar financial support);
- That some young people were unaware of how to access opportunities in gaining insights into the industry, such as work experience and internships.

Diversity and inclusion practice within the industry

- That there was a need for job sites and community networks to more widely advertise opportunities within the manual trade industry (e.g. the WEPS in Doncaster and Go Construct STEM Ambassador scheme) ;
- That those organisations that were working with schools to introduce young people into the opportunities within the construction and manual trades opened up their perception of the sector (e.g. Mayor's Construction Academy, Wates and Multiplex Global, for instance);
- That promoting the opportunities within the construction industry, especially providing entry level training, such as we saw in Doncaster, open up possibilities for upskilling existing staff as well as introduce new opportunities to those showing an interest;
- That a number of large construction companies and local authorities have developed and are implementing strategic policies and infrastructure changes to encouraging a much broader base of workers into the sector (e.g. Wates, Multiplex Global, Transport for London, Go Construct and Doncaster are examples).

Change requires that we recognise the gaps in our knowledge, attitudes and practice in order to change perceived reality. It will therefore require change on the side of the perceiver and the perceived, in this case both Black and minoritised young people and the construction industry. Some of the emerging questions that we were only just able to surface, and which will require further investigations, included:

- Are Black and minoritised young people excluded because of their ethnicity?
- To what extent are different Black and minoritised ethnic groups more likely to work in the manual trades than others?
- To what extent are culture, class and gender strong influences on young people's choices?
- Is the drive to acquire a university degree pushing young people away from a career in the manual trade?

What is clear from this initial research is that we need to better understand the push and pull factors that will entice or repel young people from a career in the manual trades. As we move out of the restrictive COVID-19 pandemic situation, a period that has seen rapid expansion in the digital industries, the challenges could become even more acute for the sector.

Recommendations

Based on our key findings, we recommend the following actions that we feel are likely to make a difference in addressing some of the shortages within the manual trades of Black and minoritised ethnic young people. They are:

Parental and community influence:

- to address concerns of opportunities and the value of a manual trades career pathway through community based orientation, there is a need for understanding and awareness programmes, linked wherever possible with industry approved training providers, delivered through credible and recognised voluntary and community sector organisations.

White-male laddish culture:

- to address this perception, to promote the diverse workforce within the construction and manual trades at all levels, more widely and generally as part of any recruitment and selection strategy. This is very much a communication agenda, and so consideration as to targeting must be considered which could include using different languages as appropriate and relevant.

Careers information, advice and guidance:

- for schools and community-based organisations providing careers information, advice and guidance to adopt a proactive career offer to young people under the age of 16yrs in particular alongside work experience and internship opportunities. Where schools operate 'work experience placements', consideration should be taken to open up new opportunities within the construction and manual trade sector, especially working with sole traders and small businesses, who could offer valuable opportunities as large companies.

Diversity and inclusion practice within the industry:

- to encourage and support those large companies with engagement opportunities in opening up placements, apprenticeships and learning opportunities, including scholarship considerations, where this is viable.

INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXT

The Ubele Initiative (Ubele) have been granted funding from Youth Futures Foundation (YFF) to conduct a national baseline analysis of the needs, future training and employment opportunities within the manual trades sector for young people aged 16 – 24yrs that are from Black and minoritised communities [2].

The purpose of the research was to better understand and identify gaps and/or barriers preventing access to gaining employment and career opportunities in the construction and manual trade industry by young people aged 16 – 24yrs who are from Black and minoritised communities. The research sought also to look at routes that exist to entering the manual trade industry, and, if appropriate, produce a roadmap for Black and minoritised young people to increase employment opportunities within the manual trades. The research focus is on scoping current opinions, experiences and perceptions of the industry and assessing the challenges faced entering the industry.

The concerns and issues facing Black and minoritised communities within the labour market

For decades commentators have raised concerns about the presence of Black and minoritised groups in the labour market as marginalised and expendable labour force (Sanglin-Grant and Schneider, 2000; Khan, 2008; Murray, 2013). With the recent upheaval caused by the pandemic, in addition to this increased unemployment generally, some groups are hardest hit, more pronounced and significant. The recent Public Accounts Committee (July 2021), for example, makes the point that the impact on young Black people has been particularly acute, with unemployment rising to a shocking 41.6% in the last quarter of 2020 compared to the 24.5% a year earlier (pp.3) Following this publication, Black Training & Enterprise Group (BTEG), by way of a response, offered some 'pointers' as to some policy shifts that could make a difference, especially with regards to the lessons that could be learnt from the Moving On Up initiative (BTEG, 2020).

Nationally the employment rate is 75.5% with the unemployment rate at 4.2%[3]. However, these rates belie the different experiences between ethnic groups in the labour market. Young people (those aged 16 to 24 years), in particular, have been affected by the pandemic, with the employment rate decreasing and the unemployment and economic inactivity rates increasing by more than for those aged 25 years and over (ONS, 2021)[4].

[2] Since the murder of George Floyd in May 2020, the debate around the use of the acronym BAME, to refer to 'Black, Asian and Minority ethnic (BAME) has taken on a confusing aura, with a range of people using various labels (unhelpful in most cases) in an attempt to 'regularise and normalise' the labelling of this wider group of people. It is noted that LCF/JPMorgan Chase use the Black and minority ethnic (BME) referent, while others, like BTEG and Ubele, for instance, are starting to use 'Black and minoritised ethnic' (BAME/BME) while others use People of Colour (POC) and 'ethnic minorities' and still further the resurgence of the use of 'Black and Brown' people as references. For the purpose of this piece of work the acronym BME, to refer to Black and minoritised ethnic group, will be used unless there are direct references drawn from reports where the BAME acronym is being used. Under those circumstances, BME and BAME will mean the same thing.

[3] Home - Office for National Statistics (ons.gov.uk)

[4] Labour market overview, UK - Office for National Statistics (ons.gov.uk); www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/subnational-labour/regional-labour-market-statistics/index.html

According to the Office for National Statistics' (ONS) latest labour market figures, proportionately just as many Indians were in employment as the England national average: 77.4% compared to 77.2%. As an aggregated group of 'all ethnic minorities' only 67.6% were in employment compared to the England average of 77.2%, while Pakistanis and Bangladeshis had the lowest rate of employment, with 57.1% in employment and Black/Black British 67%.

While the current unemployment rate is 4.2% (ONS, 2022):

- 9.5% of 'Other Asian background' were unemployed between Jan to March 2020 compared to the national average of 3.6%;
- 9.7% of 'Pakistanis' were unemployed between Oct and Dec 2020 while the national average was 4.5%, twice as many as the national average;
- Overall, those categorised as "BAME" were 8.0% compared to 4.5%. "BAME" groups are twice as likely to be unemployed than their white counterparts.

Further data from the ONS highlight that presence in certain industries varied across ethnicities. The most recent set of data from the December 2021 Labour Force Survey shows that certain ethnic groups were concentrated in particular industries, with:

- Men from the Asian/Asian British groups concentrated across the 'Accommodation and food service activities' (e.g. working in restaurants and hotels) and 'Wholesale and retail trade' (e.g. shops). Over a third of Bangladeshi men (36%) worked in the 'Accommodation and food service industries.
- Women from the Black ethnic minorities and Other Asian were highly concentrated within the 'Human health and social work activities' while 4 in 10 (38%) Black African women worked in this sector.
- Using the 2011 Census data, 37% of men in employment worked in low-skilled occupations with more than half of them being Pakistani (57%), Black African (54%) and Bangladeshi (53%). Men who were the least likely to work in low-skilled occupations were Chinese (24%), closely followed by White Irish (29%).
- Overall, almost 6 in 10 (59%) women in employment worked in low skilled jobs in the 2011 Census. Women most likely to work in low skilled jobs were Gypsy or Irish Traveller (71%), Bangladeshi (67%) and White and Black Caribbean (66%). Like men, women least likely to work in low skilled jobs were Chinese (42%) and White Irish (45%)[5].

Based on the 2011 Census,[6] significantly more Gypsy and Traveller young people aged 16 - 24yrs were 'inactive' (30%) compared to the national average of 5% with up to 24% in employment compared to the national average of 38%. In contrast, other ethnic minority 16 - 24yrs olds showed 88% of Chinese were 'students' (in education and learning), while 74% were Black Africans and 67% Indians. In terms of employment/unemployment, more Indians and Black Caribbeans (25% each) were in employment, while Mixed White and Black Caribbeans (13%), Black Caribbeans (12%) and 10% Pakistani and Bangladeshi 16 -24yrs olds were more likely to be unemployed. This pattern had not substantially changed over the intervening years up to and including the first phase of the pandemic (Jan to Dec 2020)[7].

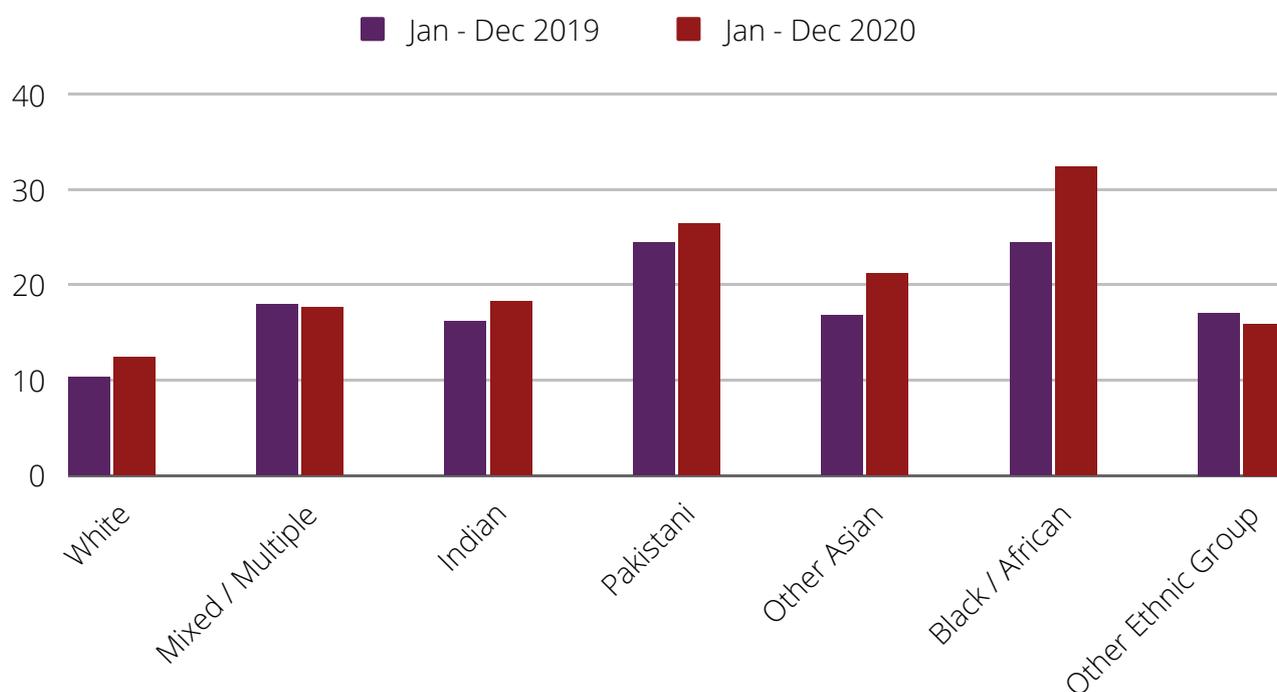
[5] Office for National Statistics: 2011 Census analysis - Office for National Statistics (ons.gov.uk)

[6] [ARCHIVED CONTENT] youngpeopleaged1624employedunemployed_tcm77-384747.png (589x669) (nationalarchives.gov.uk) [3 January 2022]

[7] Data for the full year ending Dec 2021 is not yet available.

With the onset of the pandemic, the impact on young people within the labour market was stark. As Fig 1 shows, while the national average was around the 12% mark for the period ending December 2020, unemployment across the major ethnic minority groups ranged from 17% (Mixed Multiple Ethnic Groups) to 32% (Black African and Caribbean). Also, these figures reflected the general pattern and level of unemployment across ethnicities in the year prior to the onset of the pandemic (Jan to Dec 2019), where the unemployment rate ranged from 16% (Indian) to 24% (Black African, Caribbean and Pakistani). Thus, further highlighting the concerns for the employment prospects of Black and minoritised young people aged 16 -24yrs in the labour market.

Fig 1: Unemployment rate (%) for young people (aged from 16 to 24 years) by ethnicity, UK (Jan 2019 to Dec 2020)



Source: Youth Unemployment, January to March 2019 to October to December 2020 - Office for National Statistics (ons.gov.uk)

What these sets of figures tells us is that Black and minoritised young people from Mixed (White and Black Caribbean), Black Caribbean, Pakistanis and Bangladeshi background are more likely to be unemployed and least likely to be in education and learning. Also, they are more likely to be employed in low-skilled jobs, and, in terms of self-employment, more Gypsy and Travellers were more likely to be self-employed while Bangladeshi and Black Caribbean women least likely to be self-employed. This suggests that young people from Gypsy and Travellers, Mixed Caribbean, Black Caribbean, Pakistani and Bangladeshi communities are likely to occupy the lowest paid positions (e.g. SOC3 and SOC9 [8]) and/or over concentrated in certain industry sectors (e.g. ONS, 2021).

[8] Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) is the common classification of occupational information for the UK. The standard describes how jobs are classified in terms of their skill level and skill content and used to describe roles and responsibilities against nine major groups within the labour market (e.g. SOC 1 to SOC 9, where SOC1 refers to Managers, directors and senior officials and SOC 9 to Elementary occupations).

What are the manual trades and why is this sector important in light of the labour market condition?

As part of the research, we undertook desk research to better understand the manual trades and the construction industry. Consideration was given to what the most popular manual trades are, which trades have the most skills shortage, who sets the standards and guidelines for the construction industry, what training and apprenticeship opportunities existed (and where), barriers to entering the manual trades and examples of good practice.

Much has already been written about construction as a career choice for young people and why there is a lack of attraction, recruitment and retention of young people in this industry (Construction Youth Trust, 2020). Even though increasing representation of minority groups within the manual trades is being highlighted in many reports (Wates, 2022; Multiplex Global, 2021), there is often a focus on women as a minority group in the construction industry with a secondary focus on Black and minoritised communities (Waters and McAlpine, 2017; Seabright and Shiels, 2020). In addition, where increasing diversity is mentioned there is an emphasis on the experience of Black men rather than Black and minoritised communities as a whole (GLA and Runnymede Trust, 2020).

Evidence gained in the early formative stages of the research indicated that the main barriers preventing young people, and specifically Black and minoritised young people, from the manual trades are: negative perceptions of the industry, a lack of visible and realistic representation, the lack of information on the benefits of apprenticeships, educational barriers, biased recruitment processes, non-inclusive work cultures and inequalities in pay and progressions (Waters and McAlpine, 2017; GLA and Runnymede Trust, 2020).

The methodological approaches used in many of these studies ranged from literature reviews, focus groups with young people and structured and semi-structured interviews with both young people and also construction companies, referral partners and other organisations. However, there was a noticeable lack of interviews and focus groups with apprenticeship and training providers to gauge what practices they are implementing to address the historic underrepresentation of Black and minoritised young people in the manual trades. Similarly, focus groups conducted with young people did not specifically include a group of Black and minoritised young people, therefore their unique opinions, experiences, perceptions and challenges have not been fully captured in existing research. Therefore, there is a significant gap in the discourse on Black and minoritised young people in the manual trades, which formed the focus of the research.

Construction is traditionally defined in Standard Industrial Classification (SIC) as construction of buildings, civil engineering, and construction of specialised buildings. [9] In our research we refer to both the construction industry and the manual trades as separate sectors housed under the much broader referent of 'construction and built industry' with a specific focus on the 'manual trades' sector.

[9] UK Standard Industrial Classification of Economic Activities (SIC) (2007).

The occupations classified as manual trades are based on Construction Industry Training Board's (CITB) Construction Skills Network's definition, which includes: wood trades and interior fit-out; electrical trades and installation; plumbing and HVAC trades; labourers not elsewhere classified (NEC); painters and decorators; building envelope specialists; bricklayers, specialist building operatives NEC; plasterers; roofers; plant mechanics/fitters; plant operatives; glaziers; floorers; steel erectors/structural fabrication; logistics; scaffolders; civil engineering operatives NEC; non-construction operatives (CITB and Experian, 2018).

Section 1: This section provides a brief overview of our approach in conducting the research.

Section 2: This section looks at the construction and manual trade industry and routes to entering the manual trade industry (e.g. apprenticeships, training, qualifications, self-employment)?

Section 3: What the research process revealed: what young people had to say.

Section 4: In this concluding section, we summarise some of the key findings from the research with some thoughts on implications for policy and practice from within the industry and local authorities that are focused on the needs of Black and minoritised young people entering the manual trades.

SECTION 1: METHODOLOGICAL APPROACHES

Given that the construction trade covers a vast range of skill sectors, due to time and resources, we focused on the manual trades sectors more generally, while recognising that within the wider construction industry, many of those who are skilled manual trade professionals will be employed on construction sites as well as within the broader construction and built industry. This area of employment we termed the 'pipeline trades' into the construction industry, and for some, this pipeline offers a good grounding for later career progression within the industry.

The field research [10] was based on semi-structured 1-2-1 (n=46) and focus group interviews (n=32) with young people 16 – 24yrs as well as a survey questionnaire, which was randomly distributed through Ubele's network of organisations across the UK (n=20). Additionally, structured interviews (n=4) and two focus group sessions (n=6) were conducted with professional trades people and one BAME-led apprenticeship provider based in London. From these processes, 108 participants overall were either interviewed or responded to the online SurveyMonkey questionnaire between September and November 2021 (further details are contained in Appendix 1 – methodological approach).

In broad terms, the research included desk research sitting alongside qualitative and quantitative approaches, using structured 1-2-1 and focus group interviews, surveys and national statistics, where this supported and helped in our wider understanding of the sector and the presence of Black and minoritised young people specifically, and more generally, across the broader 16 – 64yrs labour cohort. Participants also included a cross-section of practicing professionals in the industry as well as young people under the age of 24yrs, who were on an Apprenticeship programme.

Against the backdrop earlier indicated, informed by the data from the desk research, we focused on young people who were from the following ethnic groups: Asian, Black and other ethnic background young people aged 16-24yrs. They have the highest rates of unemployment while at the same time, the least likely to remain in education and learning post compulsory schooling.

Specifically:

1-2-1 interviews

- Structured 1-2-1 interviews with training providers and professional trade workers in the industry (n=4);
- Structured 1-2-1 interviews with young people aged 16 – 24yrs about career pathways, opportunities and experiences (n=46);

[10] In the implementation of our objectives, we were ably supported by a team of trained 'peer researchers' through our CPD endorsed programme which provided over 18hrs training. Details of the training programme can be obtained by contacting The Ubele Initiative.

Focus group sessions

- Black and minoritised manual trades people (men and women) who have/are working in the manual trades (n=6);
- Black and minoritised young people who may have interest in pursuing a career and employment opportunities in the manual trade industry (n=32).

Survey questionnaire

- Online survey questionnaire targeted to young people aged 16 to 24yrs (n=20).

Though further information can be seen in Appendix 1, by way of summary overview, Tables 1 to 3 below shows breakdown based on gender/sex of young people engaged, the practitioners involved in the manual trades and ethnic breakdown across all phases of the research process.

Table 1: Overview summary by gender of the young people engaged

Gender/sex	Survey	1-2-1/focus group	Total
Female	10	39	49
Male	9	39	48
Non-binary	1		1
Total	20	78	98

Table 2: Overview summary of the practitioners engaged

Practitioners	1-2-1 interviews	Focus group	Total
Manual trades professionals	3	6	9
Apprenticeship Training provider	1	0	1
Total	4	6	10

Table 3: Overall summary of participants by ethnicity across all phases

Ethnicity	Survey	1-2-1/focus group	Total
Black	5	41	46
Asian	3	31	34
Mixed		5	5
Other	2	9	11
White		3	3
Unspecified	4	5	9
Total	14	78	108

The key questions that the research approaches sought answers to were termed the 'primary imperative' questions, and in Section 2 we provide some specific evidence from the field research with young people around questions 4 to 6, in particular. The primary imperative questions were:

1. What does the employment/unemployment 'labour market' look like and how are Black and Minoritised young people positioned within this?
2. What are the manual trades and why this sector is important in light of the labour market condition?
3. What are the future employment opportunities in this field (i.e. why should we encourage Black and Minoritised young people to go into them)?
4. What are the routes to entering the manual trade industry (e.g. apprenticeships, training, qualifications, self-employment)?
5. What have been the experiences of Black and minoritised young people entering and working in the manual trade industry? (i.e. work culture, pay, progression, etc.)
6. What are the main challenges/barriers impacting on and facing Black and minoritised young people in entering the manual trades?

Additionally, some emergent questions were raised by the research approach and focus which we termed 'secondary imperative' questions. These were largely questions focused on possible implications for policy-makers, which we divided into two sub-sets as follows:

- What policies, initiatives or schemes are in place to increase diversity in the manual trades?
- What examples are there of good or best practice in the industry?

SECTION 2: FUTURE EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES WITHIN THE CONSTRUCTION AND MANUAL TRADE SECTOR

In responding to the question of why there might be the need to encourage Black and minoritised young people to go into manual trades, evidence shows that, far from being an occupation without value and worth, the sector is rich in opportunities. These opportunities are not being taken up by people from Black and minoritised communities. For example, 94% of employees within the construction industry are from White ethnic population. Of the 6% who are from Black and minoritised communities, as Fig 2 shows, 2.7% are Asian (including Chinese) while 1.5% are Black African and Caribbean and 0.6% Mixed heritage. With respect to young people employed in the construction industry, Fig 3 shows that only 11% are aged 16 – 24yrs, more than three times as many are aged over 50yrs with the overwhelming majority being 25 – 49yrs (56%). This shows clearly that the industry has an older age workforce overall, with 1-in-10 young people being employed in the industry contrasted with 1-in-3 who are aged over 50yrs.

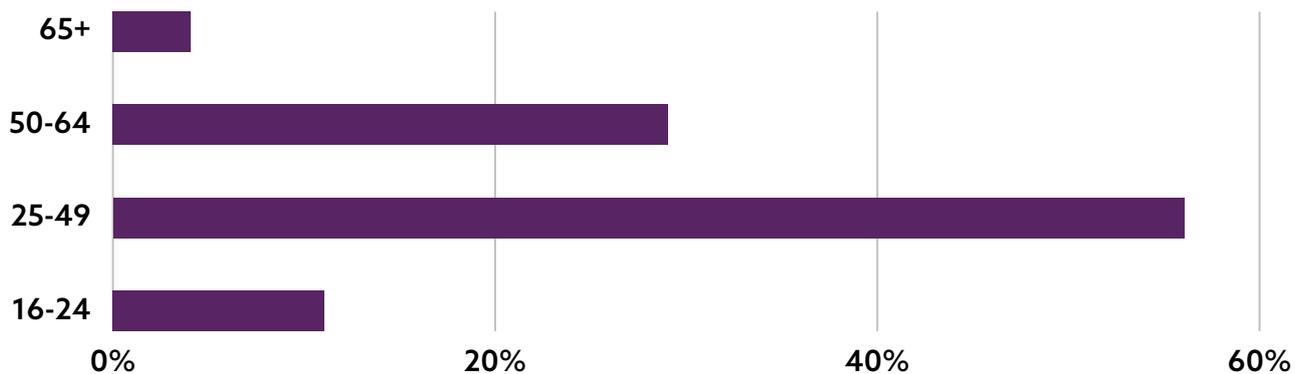
Given the legislative changes with respect to staying in learning post 16yrs, the 16 – 24yrs employed in the construction industry as shown in Fig 3, the overwhelming majority are likely to be 18 – 24yrs, with those 16 – 18yrs likely to be on apprenticeship or traineeship programmes. As shown in Table 4, construction apprenticeship leavers in the pre-pandemic full year 2019/2020 was 7% of all apprenticeships by industry sector, which places this sector around fifth out of nine sectors offering apprenticeships. The evidence in Table 4 suggests that either more apprenticeship schemes are needed or greater numbers of young people completing the programme is needed. For example, in 2019/2020 the national achievement rate for completing apprenticeships was 64.2%, with 64.1% of construction apprenticeships successfully completing their training. Only three other sectors achieved lower rates lower than the national average out of 11 sector apprenticeship schemes. This suggest more work is needed to raise the profile and attractiveness of the sector to young people and of what it will take to complete – that is, it is not an ‘easy option’.

Fig 2: Ethnic breakdown of employees in the construction industry



Source: Annual Population Survey, 07/10/19; Office for National Statistics: <http://www.ons.gov.uk>

Fig 3: Age range of employees in the construction industry



Source: Annual Population Survey, 07/10/19; Office for National Statistics: <http://www.ons.gov.uk>

Table 4: Apprenticeship leavers (actual) and achievement rate (%): 2019/2020

Industry sector	Total apprenticeship leavers	% share of all leavers	Achievement rate (%)
Arts, Media and Publishing	740	0.3%	72.4
Agriculture, Horticulture and Animal Care	4380	1.8%	67.5
Business, Administration and Law	66980	27.9%	63.8
Construction, Planning and the Built Environment	16300	6.8%	64.1
Education and Training	4780	2.0%	77.7
Engineering and Manufacturing Technologies	42640	17.8%	67.9
Health, Public Services and Care	58120	24.2%	55.3
Information and Communication Technology	13280	5.5%	72.6
Leisure, Travel and Tourism	5070	2.1%	68.9
Retail and Commercial Enterprise	27260	11.4%	61.1
Science and Mathematics	130	0.1%	73.8
Total	239680	100%	64.2

Source: Apprenticeships and traineeships, Academic Year 2020/21 - Explore education statistics - GOV.UK (explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk)

According to the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education (IATE) the construction industry comprises three substantive areas of occupational endeavors, some of which may not at first be seen as being associated with the industry and not all are considered manual trades. They are:

1. Building Services Engineering;
2. Design, surveying and planning; and
3. Onsite construction

For brevity, Appendix 2 provides an overview of the three core occupational areas under the broad construction industry umbrella. Each area is broken down to show the relevant areas that comprise each by way of an overview[11]. The area of the industry that was of interest to the research was 'Onsite construction', as this where the manual trades are located (i.e. Construction Specialists Operatives/Technicians and Core Building Trades Persons). According to the Construction Industry Training Board (CITB)[12] the manual trade sector includes the following occupations:

1. Wood trades and interior fit-out
2. Electrical trades and installation
3. Plumbing and Heating, Ventilation, and Air Conditioning (HVAC) trades
4. Labourers (not elsewhere classified)
5. Painters and decorators
6. Building envelope specialists[13]
7. Bricklayers
8. Specialist building operatives (not elsewhere classified)[14]
9. Plasterers
10. Roofers

Which trades have the most skills shortage?

Estimates of the workforce requirement for the industry suggest that additional 168,500 workers will be required between 2019-2023[15]. Specifically, these include roles for:

- Construction process managers (3,420)
- Other construction professional and technical staff (3,260)
- Wood trades and interior fit-out (2,380)

The Federation of Master Builders (FMB) is the largest trade association in the UK building industry and from their recent survey focused on small and medium-sized (SME) firms throughout the construction sector, reported shortage in:

[11] For a detailed breakdown of each area, with professional qualification levels identified, please see: Occupational Maps / Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education

[12] UK Government, Employment by sector: Ethnicity facts and figures (2018)

[13] Building include specialists install and repair non-structural coverings to buildings using a variety of materials such as wood, glass and metal

[14] Specialist building operatives - specialising in skilled construction work such as driving a fork-lift truck.

[15] Annual Recruitment Requirement (ARR) by Occupation (2019)

1. Bricklayers
2. Carpenters/joiners
3. Plumbers and HVAC trades
4. Plasterers
5. General construction operatives
6. Roofers
7. Electricians
8. Plant operatives
9. Painters and decorators
10. Steel fixers

Young people not in employment, education or training (NEET)

Youth unemployment is a major challenge for employment policy development. Powell (2021), in his Commons Library Research Briefing, identified that 728,000 people aged 16-24 were Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) in January-March 2021, which was 10.6% of all people in this age group. That is, anybody who is not in any of the forms of education or training and not in employment is considered to be NEET. Consequently, a person identified as NEET will always be either unemployed or economically inactive. In the 3 years from 2017 to 2019, an average of 11.5% of young people aged 16 to 24 in the UK were not in employment, education, or training.

While the number of youth ages 15-24 has grown over the last 20 years, their participation in the labour force has decreased according to International Labour Organisation (ILO, 2020). A good many of these young people tend to be employed in the informal economy holding jobs that are commonly characterised by low pay, hazardous working conditions, and little job security. The decrease in the 15 - 24yrs employment can also be put down to legislative changes introduced in September 2013, where the law now required that young people continue in education, employment or training until the age of 18yrs. The result of this is to reduce the number of young people 16 - 18yrs deemed NEET and to reduce the number likely to be seeking employment under the age of 18yrs unless they were in an apprenticeship programme or employed over substantial hours per week and/or undertaking some training[16]. Of those employed in the formal economy, many are underemployed, or their skills do not align with employers' needs (PWC, 2021).

Based on the evidence provided by ONS, young people aged 16 - 24yrs who are NEET, shows that more Pakistani (14.3%) and Bangladeshi (12.0%) young people are unemployed and/or inactive while those least NEET are Chinese (4.5%).

[16] You can leave school on the last Friday in June if you'll be 16 by the end of the summer holidays. You must then do one of the following until you're 18: stay in full-time education, for example at a college, start an apprenticeship or traineeship or spend 20 hours or more a week working or volunteering, while in part-time education or training (School leaving age - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk))

Table 5: Percentage of young people (aged 16 to 24) who were not in employment, education or training by ethnicity [17]

Ethnicity	%
Bangladeshi	12.0
Chinese	4.5
Indian	7.3
Pakistani	14.3
Asian other	11.3
Black	11.5
Mixed	11.0
White	11.7
Other	9.6

Source: ONS, 2020: Young people not in education, employment or training (NEET) by ethnicity - Office for National Statistics (ons.gov.uk)

What are the routes to entering the manual trade industry?

There are a number of ways to enter manual trade and construction industry. For example, some companies choose to hire entry-level employees without education and then train them in-house, others require a certain level of initial certification/qualification such as a degree or a registered and approved apprenticeship programme. While these opportunities exist, evidence suggest that construction opportunities were not being taken-up; that is, not enough young people were ready to take them up.

What then are the options open to young people? Other than in-house employment linked to on-the-job-training, the range of policy reforms to the skills training, including Apprenticeship Levy, new apprenticeship Standards, new T-level programme and Kickstart, has increased the access to the industry. In broad terms, there are 3 key routes into the manual trades sector:

1. On the job-training:
 - a. Industry apprenticeships;
 - b. Traineeships
 - c. Kickstart
2. Further education and skills and training providers;
3. Higher education/university

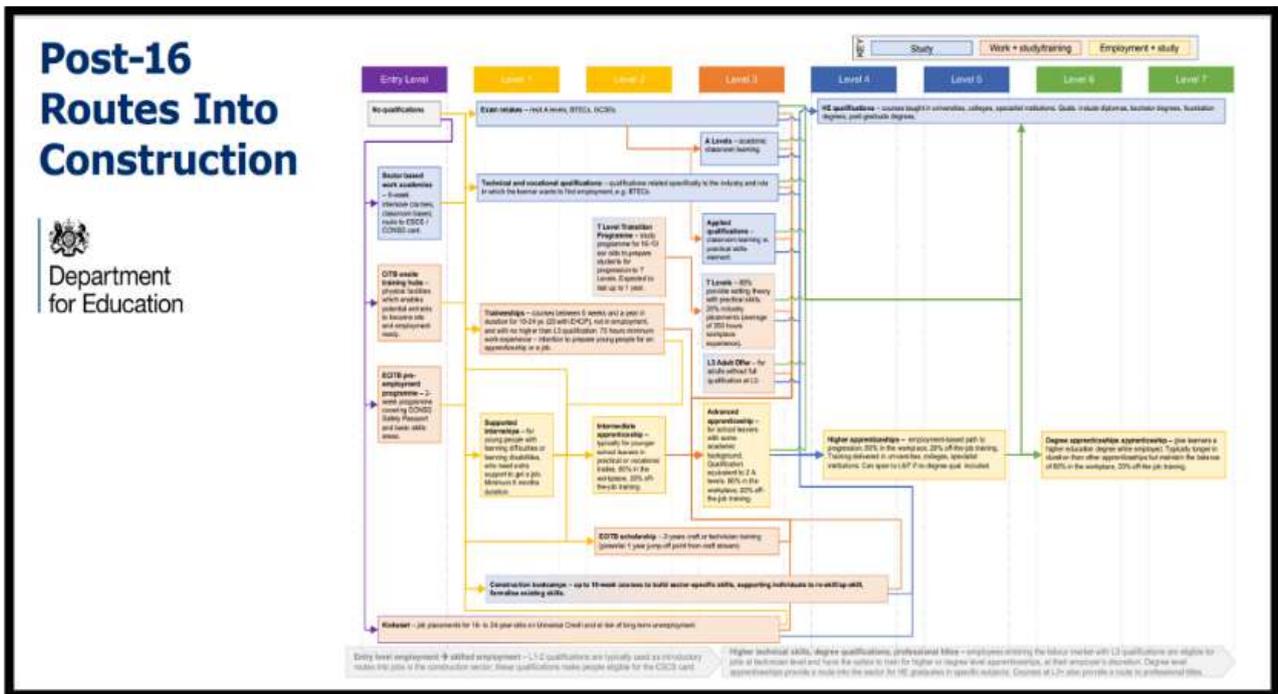
As indicated above, the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education (IATE) pathway map provides a useful and helpful overview of the qualification routes into the construction industry covering[18]:

[17] Young people who are NEET are divided into those who are actively seeking employment ('unemployed') and those who are not ('economically inactive') - Published by Office of National Statistics.

[18] A topographic representation is included as Appendix 2 with individual trade breakdown accessible via: Institute for Apprenticeships & Technical Education

1. Building Services Engineering – e.g. plumbing & domestic heating technician, facilities services operative, highways electrician.
2. Design, Surveying & Planning – e.g. Civil engineering technician, surveying technician, construction support technician.
3. Onsite Construction – e.g. tunnelling operative, highways maintenance supervisor, scaffolder, tiler.

Fig 4: Entrance into the manual trade: roadmap



Source: Construction Leadership Council, Industry Skills Plan for the UK Construction Sector 2021 – 2025, p. 15.

On the job-training

Apprenticeships

Apprenticeships are paid jobs that incorporate on and off the job training. The Government has committed to the development and delivery of apprenticeship schemes that equips apprentices with job specific skills that will improve their chances of finding and maintaining long term employment. In the Plan for Jobs, for example, the Government had announced that it would pay employers in England £2,000 for every new apprentice they hire who is aged under 25, and £1,500 for every apprentice they hire who is aged 25 and over^[19]. These payments were provided for apprentices employed from the start of August 2020 to the end of March 2021.

These payments were on top of the £1,000 that the Government provides to employers for every apprentice they take on who is either aged between 16 and 18 or aged between 19 and 24 and has previously been in care or who have a Local Authority Education, Health and Care plan.

The CITB is the industry training board in England, Scotland and Wales, and its purpose is to support the construction industry to attract talent and support skills development. CITB is the main training provider for the construction industry in the UK, and all construction businesses are required by law to register with the CITB.

CITB runs the National Construction College (NCC), which offers over 140 of training courses at its training centres and 3 campuses across England, Wales and Scotland. These courses include; construction plant operative, roofing and tiling, scaffolding and health and safety awareness amongst others.

The CITB Apprenticeship Scheme offers apprenticeships at three levels:

- Level 2 - equivalent to GCSEs/Standard Grades
- Level 3 - equivalent to A Levels/Highers
- Level 4 - equivalent to Foundation Degree/Advanced Highers.

This scheme combines on-site experience with college learning and is developed in consultation with the industry. Apprenticeships usually last two to four years.

Traineeships

Traineeships provide education, training and work experience for young people aged under 24 who are unemployed and have little work experience but can be prepared for employment or an apprenticeship within six months. Traineeships were first established for young people aged 16-24 who were qualified below level three, but the criteria had been expanded to include those with level three qualifications. The Government has announced that it will pay employers £1,000 for every new trainee they take on from the start of September 2020 to the end of July 2022.

[19] A Plan for Jobs 2020 - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

Kickstart

The Kickstart scheme provides funding to employers who create new jobs for young people with the intention of creating “hundreds of thousands” of 6-month work placements[20]. It is aimed at 16-24 year olds in Great Britain who are on Universal Credit and are deemed at risk of long-term unemployment.

The scheme pays employers to create new jobs for young people, but funding is conditional on the employer proving that these jobs are new and are not replacing jobs held by staff who have recently been made redundant. The jobs created must provide a minimum of 25 hours per week, for 6 months. The employers will also be expected to provide training and support to the Kickstarter to find a permanent job[21].

Further education and skills and training providers

City & Guilds Group Business offers construction and BSE education and training covering a wide range of trades and sub-sectors. They also have the assessment infrastructure in place to service end-point assessment (EPA) demand. These qualification frameworks support standards including: Gas Engineering; Refrigeration Air Conditioning and Heat Pump; Carpentry and Joinery, Advanced Carpentry and Joinery, Bricklayer, Plumbing and Domestic Heating Technician, Plasterer, Painter and Decorator and Property Maintenance Operative.

[20] Kickstart Scheme - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

[21] The scheme is a short term programme due end in March 2022.

SECTION 3: WHAT DID THE RESEARCH REVEAL?

What have been the experiences of Black and minoritised young people entering and working in the manual trade industry?

The young people who participated in the field research, including the survey respondents, were asked to reflect on three sub-questions that would help to understand their experiences. These were:

1. What is their understanding of the manual trade?
2. What they saw and understand as the route into accessing training and employment?
3. The sort of advice they were receiving about career options and where these were coming from?

To the first sub-question, based on 1-2-1 and focus group session, participants observed that the:

- The most common jobs that young people could identify as a manual trade were electrician, plumber, mechanic and builder.
- Young people expressed that these physical jobs (seeing them as manual labour jobs) were very important for society as without them we could not function well.
- Stereotypical views about manual trade workers were evident in responses and during conversations which included comments about those workers being: unintelligent, pre-dominantly white workers, not seen as a glamorous career which will pay them enough and perceived as majority male domain.
- Even though Black and other minoritised young people knew people who they could relate to - someone like them - within the manual trades industry they still saw it as a predominantly white labour force; they don't often see themselves within this industry.

Despite the outline framework for entering construction and the manual trade sector earlier indicated, there seems a perception that the sector is dominated by who you know rather than what you know: "... I am familiar that there are apprenticeships for specific roles, but just don't know how I would get on to it." [Young person - North West]

While some were able to identify routes into the sector, there were, surprisingly many, who were unaware of the routes into the trade. For some in this category, word of mouth seemed to be their general understanding (e.g. working with someone in the industry to show you the ropes). Their observation was that the sector is dominated by who you know and having contact in the trade. One respondent in the North East talked about being 'self-taught', that is "starting with small things, like painting or carpentry" and then progressing through working alongside someone they know who was prepared to "show them the ropes."

Two interviewees; professionals from the trade in London confirmed this observation. One interviewee was a 'gas fitter' working with a well-known company and another was self-employed, illustrating the different routes into the trade. The gas fitter was introduced into the trade by his father, who had changed career path after many years as a car mechanic and then took up plumbing through 'supporting a friend' who was a qualified plumber. Based on his insights, he encouraged his son to enroll on a 'gas fitters' course that the Department for Work and Pensions was sponsoring for those who were unemployed. Following the 'Traineeship' programme, he was taken on by the employer and has been with them now for close to 10 years.

The second respondent was a plumber, who runs his own company after following "his father and mothers' footsteps." He was in no doubt about his career path as he worked for his dad's company, saw the hard work involved and had been helping out from time to time. As he said, by the time he was 25yrs (he is now 33yrs) he was looking to start up his own company after going to college to learn the trade and securing his CORGI license, which legally registered him as a gas safety engineer / business. In his words, "I have a small team who I can call on and am my own boss. What I earn is down to me and how hard I work. I travel around London and, sometimes late at nights due to callouts and emergencies. I don't go raving much but I am doing what I want. By the time I was 28yrs I was able to buy a property and now have that rented as I can still live at home. I am making the opportunity work for me and will move out soon and be able to pay off the mortgage by the time I am 35yrs." According to this respondent, many of his peers are living at home and unable to find a deposit let alone paying off a mortgage. So, for him, it is a job that can and does pay, if you are prepared to put the work in - and it's not easy.

Despite the majority of young people knowing somebody in the manual trade industry, they were all older people and none within their age range (16 - 24yrs). They also indicated they perceived the industry to be a "white man's job" and perhaps older people's job more generally: "I don't know a lot of people in the manual trades industry, maybe when I get older" [Young person - East Midlands]. One young person stated that the perception of it being an Eastern European dominated field was "a misconception due to what is put out in the media, because if we look at family and friends, black people always know a handyman."

What advice/support are schools providing young people about the manual trades?

The responses also beg the question as to the advice young people are receiving (or not) and from whom. 1-2-1 interviews showed that young people felt that schools did not provide sufficient information, advice and guidance while the online survey revealed the channels where many received advice and guidance. First, comments from those who participated in the 1-2-1 interviews on school, advice and career guidance:

"If schools introduced different sectors, and different types of jobs such as engineering, construction, even cooking, I think people would get interested in a career in that sector." [Young person - London]

"Growing up I was not educated about this sector and opportunities. It should be introduced at schools. I remember having career days at school where you learned all about the traditional types of careers, but not the type of careers in the manual trades sector. Only engineering, not electrician, plumber." [Young person – East Midlands]

"I don't think we were really introduced personally to the manual trades well. In school I wasn't introduced to the manual trades just because I had done my A levels and I think my school didn't think it would be a pathway for me.... It was more like if you want this job, get this degree type thing." [Young person – London]

"I think schools [should] invest in finding apprenticeships and working in collaboration as they do with universities." [Young person – East of England]

"I think when they have fair and stuff like the career drop-in, they need people from those organisations, and expose apprenticeships and work in collaboration with other companies." [Young person – North West]

Young people have reported that school plays a massive role in deciding what careers and jobs students should pursue. We found that none of the fifteen participants were introduced to jobs like electrician, plumber, carpenter, construction at school. The main careers were finance, economy, lawyer, teaching, marketing, office jobs. They reported that they were not encouraged and introduced to the different pathways for manual trades jobs. The following comments offer some direct insights:

"Growing up I was not educated in this sector and opportunities."

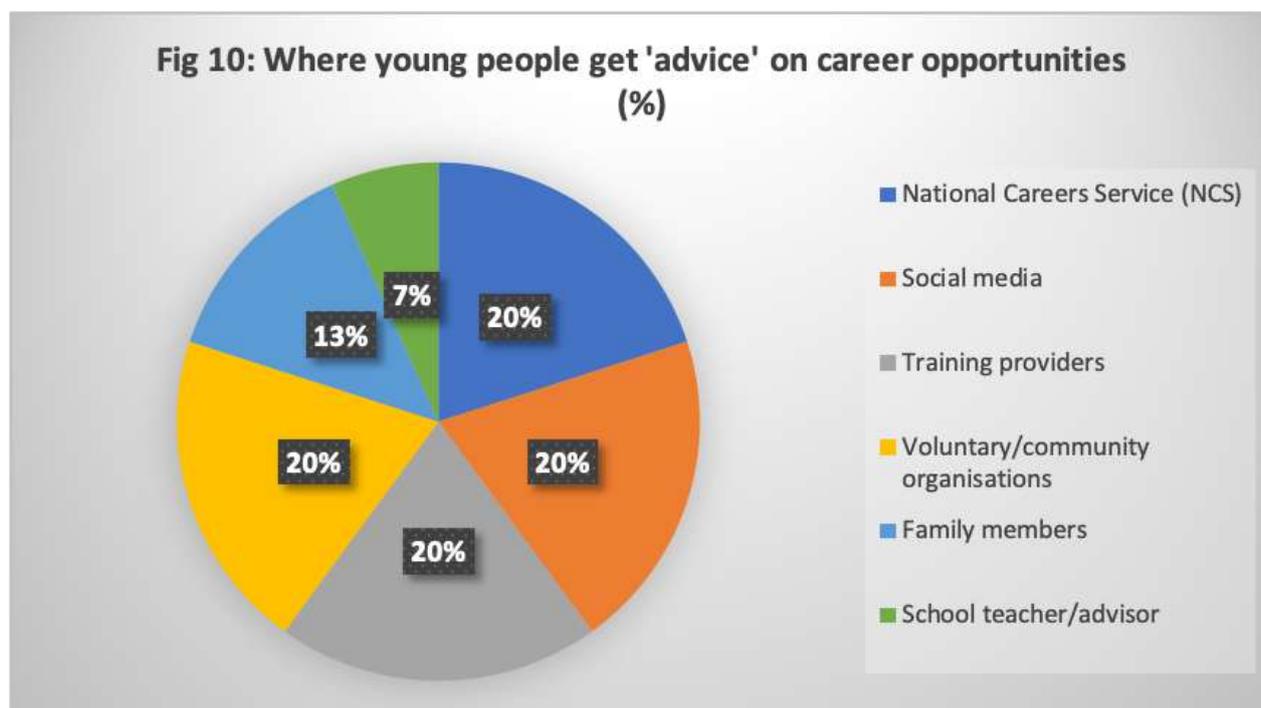
"I was not introduced to jobs in the manual trade. I was introduced more to traditional careers." (Young person – London)

"In school, nobody, no teacher or headteacher ever encouraged someone to go into being an electrician or plumber, that was never heard of. It was just those jobs that seemed high in society." (Young person - London)

"It is not inclusive. The school system is not open to things that are not traditional jobs. Accounting, nursing. They do not expose you to other jobs opportunities." (Young person - London)

With respect to the responses to the online questionnaire, while not a representative sample, and only reflecting the views of 20 respondents, the responses offer a glimpse into the channels where young people seek and receive 'advice and information'. As Fig 10 shows, only 7% of those who responded indicated receiving advice through the school or via a career advisor within the school contrasted with one-in five (20%) obtaining 'advice and information' via social media (amongst others). Family members also scored poorly with only 13% of young people (twice as many as schools) getting advice and information through this channel. This suggests that schools, where young people spend the majority of their waking time, provides perhaps the least opportunity for advice and information leaving young people to be 'informed' through social media, training providers, voluntary and community organisations and the NCS.

From some of the comments received, the organisation and convening of 'Career Days' or similar appear to be non-existent in some schools. As an example of surfacing concerns worthy of further exploration, this observation would definitely benefit from further investigation and research.



Base n=20

There were noticeable differences between ethnic groups on entering the manual trade. Interview responses highlighted that young people from Asian and African backgrounds considered academic pursuit to be the career path of choice, especially programmes that were university focused:

"...the school highly encouraged us to go to university but never really mentioned that we could do anything apart from going to university and getting a degree"
[Asian - West Midlands]

Young people are consistently told that the level of education and qualification they achieve is vital to their future career success in the labour market. There is an expectation that higher levels of educational attainment will result in better job prospects and higher wages. Even a high level of education attainment does not always guarantee a decent well-paid job, especially if you are a young Black and minoritised worker. Unless action is taken there is a real risk that young Black and minoritised workers will not invest in further education and training.

There were views that some considered manual trades to be of low skills with low earning power, poorer working conditions and less security and that entering into the profession would be the last option for them. As Fig 11 shows, the average weekly earnings within the construction industry are above the national average, only bettered by those working in the Finance and Business Services.

One respondent to the online questionnaire offered the following perspective on Black and minoritised young people entering the manual trade:

“Why are black people being encouraged to manual work pathways? Why not focus on high tech, enterprise, entertainment industries where young black people have shown so much prowess and talent and succeeded without support. What would be the result if they were supported? They would really excel! Who wants to work on a building site with rampant racist behaviour as normal?”

What are the main challenges/barriers impacting on and facing Black and minoritised young people to entering the manual trades?

Five recurring themes or challenges emerged from the interviews with participants, reflecting views and experiences from those who are in the industry, trainees and observers alike. In no particular order, they are:

1. Male dominated industry which is unwelcoming and unattractive to girls and young women. This lack of gender diversity was seen to be crucial and a barrier for women/girls getting involved. Asian female participants mentioned that they were not attracted to manual trades due to cultural, beliefs and sexist concerns.
2. The need to earn quick income and being their own boss attracted many into the manual trade industry.
3. Parental/community attitudes within particular communities influenced whether young people entered the industry or not.
4. Poor and insufficient information and advice on the opportunities and pathways for entering the manual trade.
5. Racism and discriminatory attitudes within the building trade was a barrier for some Black and minoritised young people interested in the manual trade sector.

Challenge 1: Male dominated environment

Female interview respondents remarked on how the manual trade was not a sector they are interested in working in. Many thought the field would compromise their safety with accompanying racial discrimination, sexism and harassment to contend with. One respondent shared a previous experience of racialised sexual harassment they had to endure from men working on building sites, from what they term ‘man in a van’ and in other spaces commonly associated with the manual trades. Another explained how unsafe these environments made them feel hence why that would not be an environment they would place themselves in. For many female respondents, there was the view that the industry is heavily dominated by white men who displayed predatory and inappropriate behaviour.

Another cluster of female respondents, went as far as to say that the impression gained from the promotion and marketing of the Apprenticeship Schemes “always seem to be directed to younger people and males in particular.” This, for them, demonstrated (and reinforced a belief) that the industry was not for women. Similarly, in relation to ‘internship opportunities’, one respondent remarked that the advertisements of internship schemes often fail to highlight financial benefits and are therefore interpreted as being unsuitable.

However, while there was strong evidence coming through as to the gender disparity within the industry, some of the women interviewed believed that a job within the manual trade was just not for them, especially where physical strength was deemed to be necessary and, in some ways, required hard physical endeavours. As one respondent from the East Midlands remarked:

"I don't think it should be equally representative as you have to carry heavy stuff which could be dangerous for women due to health reasons...but there may be another side like managing, planning or designing..." [Asian female respondent - East Midlands]

And another from London commented:

"There could be a bit more women because you have girls that want to but won't go into it because they don't see any women on the publications" [Black female respondent - London]

And another offered the following refrain:

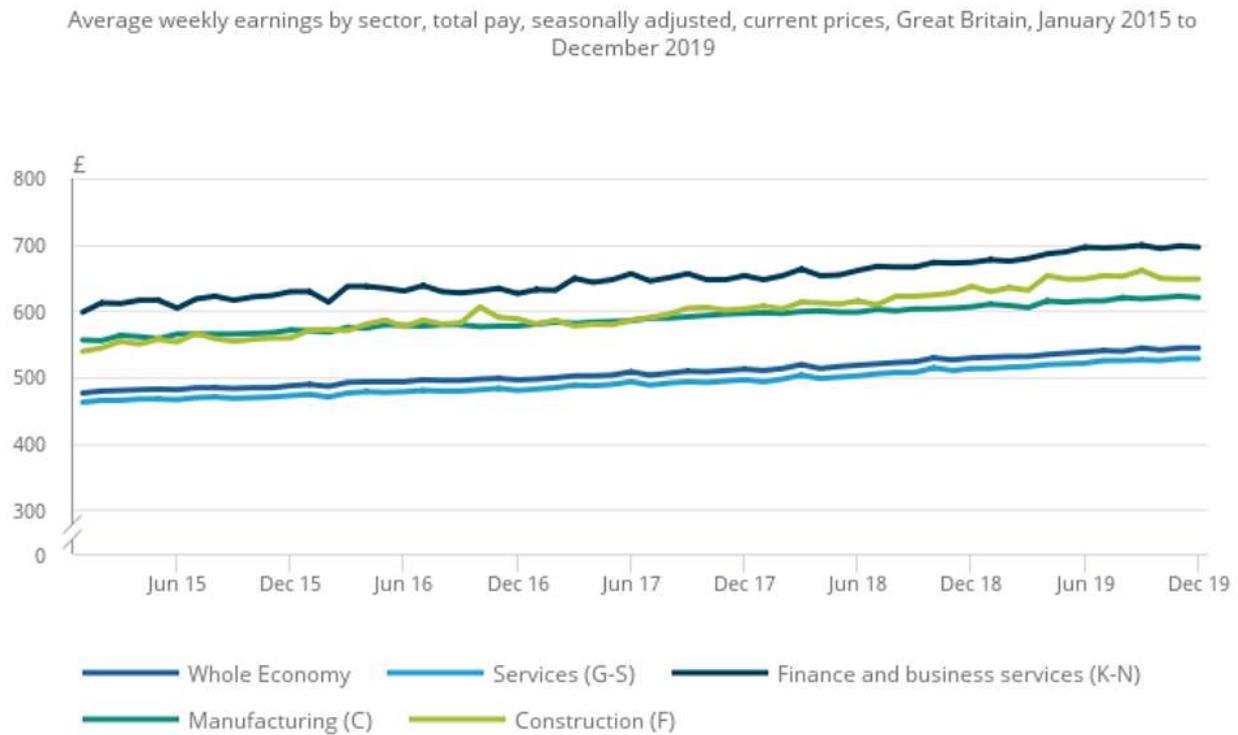
"For females it is quite challenging to enter the field as there is such a low population of females working in this field, but for males there are not any barriers." [Asian female respondent - London]

Challenge 2: Economic pay-off/benefit

The earning power within the trade was seen as a deterrent, despite evidence to the contrary. For example, data from the ONS on the average weekly pay indicate that, on average, those working in the construction and manual trades, actually earn more than some professions that are often cited as 'good' professions to enter[22]. Indeed, according to the information shown in Fig 11, those working in the financial and technology sector outperform those working in the construction and manual trade sector. Despite this picture, however, there are those who believe that the labour market is awash with high supply of manual trade workers and that this pushes down wages and price. This is particularly a concern amongst recently arrived migrants and refugee seekers, where it is argued that they provide cheap and ready labour, depressing the price and therefore earning power of professionals. This is a view held by some of the professionals interviewed who have been working in the sector for many years, especially those who worked on building sites as bricklayers, carpenters and electricians. Cheap and unregulated labour, despite attempts to better regulate, is having an impact on how the sector is perceived. As one respondent puts it: "the pay puts you off. The high supply of manual trades, particularly among migrants, mean we can't expect an increase in pay nor an increase in demand for the job." [Other ethnic respondent - East Midlands]

[22] The Office for National Statistics (ONS) Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings (ASHE) 2021 showed that those working in the annual trades occupational areas indicated in Section 2, can expect to earn somewhere between £24,300 (roofers) and £32,500 (electricians). These compare favourably to the median annual pay for full-time employees of £31,285 for the tax year ending 5 April 2021, and therefore, cannot be said to be a low paid sector.

Fig 11: Construction continues to see year on year wage growth in 2019 compared to 2018



Source: Office for National Statistics (ONS) - EARN01: average weekly earnings

It was also felt that the seemingly lack of a 'degree', in contrast to a certifying license to practice and apprenticeship training (with day release/off-the-job training), was a better indicator of worth and value; that is, because these do not require academic education they are paid less. This led to one respondent likening the manual trade as "slave work" where "you're getting paid to mash up yourself..."

Another respondent offered the following comment:

"The pay is a lot lower than say maybe someone who has graduated and got like a business degree, they would probably be earning more." [Young person - East of England]

Yet still, another offered the following response:

"Manual jobs usually don't start off with the best of pay and are much less financially rewarding than the jobs you could get if you specialised in a certain degree. I don't think I would go for a manual job unless I was desperate. They just do not seem worth it as you know people are getting paid much better than you for doing 10x less work." [Young person - London]

Another respondent from the North East opined that:

"I don't think the work is rewarding, you have to be physically strong and have to do so much work. I would much rather get a proper degree and get a job that requires less physical work and is more rewarding so I can retire early and live a lavish lifestyle." [Young person - North East]

On the whole, despite some reservations, respondents working in the industry and the young people considering this route, agreed that manual trade does offer opportunities to earn a good living and "can be paid more than working in an office job." And another offered the following:

"The salary of these jobs like plumber and electrician is high. For example, electricians are better paid than someone in entry-level in Finances." [Young person – North East]

It is clear that there are differing views as to the earning potential of working in the sector which suggest that clarity around the earning potential should be something that is highlighted more; that it is financially rewarding rather than the perception of it being 'hard work' for little recompense. Perhaps there could be more emphasis on the machines and technologies in the industry and that it entails training which is akin to degree courses rather than an image of physical attributes and perception that anyone can pick up a screwdriver and call themselves an electrician or plumber.

Some young people were quite discerning and offered responses which seemed to be pragmatic at one level and lifesaving at another:

"It is a job that requires a lot of hard work but can be rewarding financially if you are willing to work hard enough. Personally, I would only work in this field part time or for a short while as I do not see it as a long lasting career for many years. It can however be something which can help support you in the short term financially." [Young person - East Midlands]

"My father works in the manual trade, and he is self-taught. He has to work long hours and is always tired when he comes home. He has to work very hard however his hard work pays off as he is able to financially support me and the family, so I am grateful for jobs like this to exist because it means my dad always has enough money to bring the family happiness." [Young person – North West]

Challenge 3: Parental and community attitudes

Within some Black and minoritised communities, working in the manual trade seemed to be frowned upon. There were views expressed which seem to indicate that, on the whole, young people from Asian and West African background, in contrast to those from Caribbean and Eastern European background, were more influenced by parental attitudes of going to university to earn a degree. This was particularly an expectation on girls.

We heard from young people who explained that manual trade would not be an acceptable career path for their family. For them, that entailed a good education, a degree with strong career options, and a career with a stable income. A female respondent, for example, spoke about how a degree in design was a contentious topic in her family, and therefore a consideration of a career path in manual trade would be completely unacceptable. Though the respondent was very clear about the earning potential, she said that safety and security were the two driving forces in her career choices. She "just wanted the security of knowing she could provide for her family." [Asian young person - London]

Academic excellence seemed to also be accorded higher status than an apprenticeship programme and working in the manual trade. As one respondent puts it:

"...you need to have education as I feel like they may often be more good, rather than something like an apprenticeship or going towards a manual trade because it's a very different route from the kind of academic route and sometimes if people aren't getting that academic support the main option for them is to go into the manual which would be may be looked down upon like." [Asian young person - East Midlands]

And another commented, echoing the sentiments of the East Midlands speaker noted above:

"So yeah, I think maybe one barrier could be that the kind of careers within like manual industries may be looked down upon a bit as like less of a qualification...they should be working for a professional career, they should be going to uni or something like that." [Asian young person - North West]

Parental influence came out very strong in some of the interviews conducted. It was found that parents' influence was strong, with them wanting their children to study and follow an academic path with a university degree as the goal. Young people reported that parents who had migrated to the UK pushed their children to go to university so as to "get respected jobs because they know how hard it is to find work and they do not want that for their children." [Black young person - London]

Added to this, when asked about those who are the key 'influencers' in their life, young people offered the following insights:

"I would say that our parents have pushed toward those kinds of jobs." (Young person - London)

"I think those who went into manual labour did so because someone in their family were working in this sector." (Young person - South West)

"... my mum worked in a bank, so does my brother. Also, when I studied finances at school, I loved it and all the pieces fixed it together." (Young person - East of England)

"My parents migrated from different countries, and they want to see me do better and get a better life for the Family." (Young person - East Midlands)

"Parents know how hard and stressful it is to work long hours doing manual jobs for less money than working in an office job." (Young person - East Midlands)

"In Pakistan, where I'm from, there's a market for construction business so if I wanted to open a business there, that would be a good opportunity. I just don't see myself working there specifically, especially because the opportunity for women over there, especially in this field, is very limited and it's not exactly doable, I guess." [Asian young person - London]

"Due to the pressures that Black and minoritized parents put on young people to be in high-profile fields, I feel like most young people from these backgrounds would not even consider it an option sadly" [Asian young person - London]

"The challenges are posed by the family or parents rather than the industry itself. There are pressures to be in more "advanced careers" and this restricts young people from Black and minoritized backgrounds to consider having a career in this field."
[Black young person - London]

"Young people from African communities are pressured to take part in courses "that have careers" like doctors, engineers." [Black young person - London]

Challenge 4: Poor and insufficient information, advice and guidance

Evidence emanating from this research suggests that the quality and flow of information about career pathways in the manual trade was poor and/or lacking. This was especially the case in schools. This may indicate, at one level, why young people from Black and minoritised backgrounds are not entering the industry because they are not clear about what the manual industry entails.

When asked to what extent they felt schools were doing enough to educate young people about career choices, the majority of participants said that they were not doing enough in this regard. For some respondents, there was a definite absence of what they termed 'real people' coming in to talk to them about the different career opportunities and that top firms within the manual trade sector should take part in talking with students from secondary schools about opportunities. For these respondents it was simply a case of not knowing what is out there and that could make a difference in people's choices and perceptions about the industry.

Some respondents talked about their schools being 'very academic', putting an "emphasis on going to university after leaving school." Participants also talked about not knowing about 'apprenticeships', as they "were never mentioned and only found out about them when I met manual labourers and asked them about their work."

Another respondent remarked that they only got to understand the career pathways into the trades when going to "technical college, where I learnt about construction for example." Another participant during a focus group session in the North West offered this insight:

"During the college stage, as an alternative to uni, instead of professional careers, considering graduate schemes, or before uni, job fairs, careers fairs. Companies will come into that. Not sure how else people would get into the manual trade industry? I think overall there is a lack of information around the industry" [Asian young person - North West]

"In my school we were told about the different routes you could take into work. They told us you go into university, or if you don't want to, you can work! They don't tell you about apprenticeships. Even in uni I felt like I didn't get much guidance." [Asian young person - London]

Challenge 5: Presence, attitudes and opportunities: voices from the inside

The interviews with young people provided largely 'perceptions and observations' from the outside looking in (i.e. what it might be like based on what may have been heard or observed at a distance). However, while this is an important insight into the lived experience of Black and minoritised people, it can only be considered a 'looking from outside' the window perspective. To better understand the employment reality from the perspective of those involved in the trade, three sets of interviews were conducted with practitioners – past and currently practicing – and a provider of a multi-trade training organisation, which is recognised to deliver on the governments Apprenticeship Scheme. Their insights offer, both affirmation and debunking of some of the external perceptions of working in the trades industry.

In the focus group conducted with a group of plumbers, electricians, plasterers and welders (n=6 participants), it was clear that different fields carried with it certain practices and opportunities. All were black men, four lived in London, one in Birmingham and the other in Gloucester. Three of them worked for a company, two now retired and the others were self-employed. They reflected on their own experiences as a Black man learning and making a living from their trade. Importantly, they were asked to reflect on the presence, attitude and opportunities for Black young people within their respective trade sector.

The presence of black and minoritised young people in the manual trade

For those who worked in a company, they felt they had to 'prove' themselves to get the chance to undertake some of the more 'lucrative' jobs, which were often given on the basis of who is 'in with the guvnor'. One of the electricians in the group, now retired after over 30 years in the business, talked about undertaking and supervising work on a high profile national project and the changes he had seen over the years. For example, he observed that the young Black men coming into the workplace were not as committed as he'd thought they'd be, given that when he started out he was one of the few Black faces in the company. There was a sense of 'entitlement' and not wanting to learn the 'ropes': "thinking they know it all because they've just come out of from an Apprenticeship Scheme with a qualification. The real work starts when you get out into the real world."

He went onto explain:

"I'd be a fool to say that discrimination didn't happen – I know, I had to live it and come through it. And in the coming through, I became stronger for it. I am now able to retire at 60yrs, no mortgage and properties renting out across London, all because I didn't let some small-minded people stop me. And you were only talking about a few idiots back then. You do your work to the best of your ability and even they will stop making snide comments. In those days we had to contend with 'Chalkie' jokes and 'Love Thy Neighbour' style banter (I know you know what I mean!). And trust me, I came close to decking some people. They soon learnt not to mess. As more of us started to work in the company, moods and attitudes changed."

What is clear from the discussion was that the style and level of racism and discriminatory practices was more in your face then than now. For those on the ground, it seemed as though they had to develop thick skin and be able to 'dish it

out' as much as they were getting: "...I didn't let some small-minded people stop me." Of interest is the point the speaker above made in that the 'more of us' starting to work in the company the less it appeared the 'banter' ceased or lessened. This is important as it suggests that presence is a 'leveller' and one that offers opportunities to address ignorance and falsehoods, especially myths around fecklessness. I cannot recall where I heard it, but something that has stuck with me for decades is the phrase 'being there is half the battle'. This offers Black and minoritised young people an opportunity to embrace the challenge of being there and being present.

Attitude and opportunities within the manual trades

Overall, the general view was that there was (and perhaps still) evidence of discriminatory experiences encountered in companies, though less for those who were self-employed. For those in this category, it was a case of them taking control for themselves in running their own business rather than working for someone else. They rose or fell according to the efforts they put in. They do recognise that this is not for everyone but for them it works - and it is hard work. So, there is no short cut, whichever occupation one enters, rising to the top will require hard work (as well as some good fortune).

The evidence obtained highlighted a view that perhaps some young people were not as diligent or committed to the trade as they ought to be. That, for some, the trade route and choice may not really be of interest to them, but they have found themselves pursuing it because, as the training provider indicated, they didn't know what to do. If that is the case, being able to ascertain one's true career interest before leaving school should be something a well thought through career offer provides. As one young person commented, the perception of the manual trade is not on par with that of doctors or similar:

"As shallow as it sounds, I do feel like that there is a negative stigma attached to it [manual trade]. That it is not in the same field as a doctor or dentist per say, or something less practical if you understand what I mean. Although I do feel like we need to come away from this ideal as it is unfair, and all trades require hard work - some more than others." [Young person - London]

The welder, who had lived in London before relocating to Gloucester, and now retired after 40+ years, painted a picture of how he became a welder, which is a far cry from today, he explained. He was first introduced to the trade by a:

"...friend back in 1970's and did on-the-job training which included 6 months at a local college during the evenings. I had to buy my own equipment, which I had to borrow money to get. I was employed by this one company who used to pay me pittance. They used to employ illegals on offsite projects and pay them little to nothing while I was doing the main jobs and getting paid the same as them. After 10 years of this I left and started up doing my own thing, designing and constructing security gates, welding cars and anything you name it, I could make."

When asked about the changes that he saw before he retired with respect to young Black people in the business, in particular, entering the business, his response echoed that of the electrician within the group. He remarked that:

"...I didn't encounter many Black young people wanting to enter the trade, but the ones I had trained left me wondering about their life chances. They didn't want to seem to put the work in. I got comments from some of them on the grounds of 'why should I listen to you?' There seem to be a lack of confidence, feeling that they know more than you. To be honest, I felt sorry for them with their attitudes."

In the interview with the the training provider, there was a common theme with concerns raised over the difference in attitudes from the Black students compared to the White and Asian students attending his training courses. There was, he stated, a sense of not needing to:

"put the work in. That somehow they do not need to work hard to get through the course. It's as though they believe they shouldn't be here."

He further explained:

"... those who had been referred onto his courses from the prison service, with whom he has a contract, those young people wanted to achieve something; almost as if they had something to prove. They put the hard work in and found it more rewarding than the ones coming from schools. Maybe they are just not interested or know what interests them."

Perception of the manual trade by Black young people: a view from the outside

From the perspective of the young people looking in from the outside, their perception appears to be based on certain observations of "never really seeing anyone from a Black or minoritised background work in manual trade." Many of the young people responding offered an observational perspective rather than offer concrete instances of racism that they could identify. A common refrain from across the focus groups was that the manual trade sector is a "white man's job". One respondent remarked:

"Where we live Black people don't get many opportunities. For example, when I think about scaffolding, I usually would say they are white male. They might not be told about it in school, teachers might not explain the different career paths due to lack of information." [Young person - West Midlands]

When young people were asked specifically about whether they felt the manual trades sector was representative of Black and minoritised communities, all of them felt that it was not, and that when they saw a Black manual trades worker, they were either "bi-racial" or depicted in humorous roles such as "...the Money Supermarket Advert with the construction worker in heels. You have Black people, but it's not appropriate for all ages and I don't really understand the concept of the advert: how does it relate to construction work?" [Young person - London]

The industry may need to increase visibility and raise awareness of how to enter the manual trades industry and the opportunities that exist for development for it to be seen as a worthwhile career pathway - and not one that suggests that it doesn't require educational competence (or is not on par with a degree programme).

SECTION 4: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

There is a Jamaican saying that goes: 'if you want to know how many sticks are boiling a man's pot, you will need to go by his fireside'. Roughly translated, this means to understand the situation at hand, one needs to be able to see for themselves or be informed by those directly involved. Our research approach attempted to engage with the young people to understand their perceptions around entering the manual trade. This enables us to better understand some of the push and pull factors influencing their career choices.

Through our process of engagement, using ethnographic approaches, we learnt that far from a general disinterest in the manual trades there were other factors (or challenges in our parlance) that influenced young people's perception and gravitation into the manual trade industry. Four broad areas of influences were detected that we have categorised under the following headings:

- Parental and community influence
- White-male laddish culture
- Careers information, advice and guidance
- Diversity and inclusion practice within the industry

At one end of the spectrum some were influenced by parental and community considerations, while at the other end, some perceived the trade industry as being a laddish white-male dominated culture. In between these two extremes lay a careers information, advice and guidance gap, which, according to some voices, were being filled by advice from social media and friend, with schools failing to reflect and represent the true picture of what the manual trades offer. There were signs that the industry was beginning to address some of the concerns being raised about how diverse and inclusive they are – and not just along race and ethnic lines but gender more specifically.

Parental and community influences

Through the research approaches, and the evidence indicated in Section 3 of this report, it has become clear that there are a range of challenges confronting young people that are influencing their interest in and/or gravitation towards a career in construction and manual trades. Some of those challenges, as we have tried to show, relate to cultural differences and 'priorities' within the home and informed perception of what the 'community' will say. This was more pronounced in some communities where the young people came from than in others (Asian and African communities), where status and priorities were given to academic excellence, often seen through the acquisition of university degrees.

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In summary, we found:

- That the perception of the manual trade industry within the Black and minoritised ethnic communities was not seen as a viable or worthy career path with pressures from family and communities to pursue higher education;
- That, within some families, manual trade was perceived as an alternative option to the more academic and prestigious route of a university degree, thus creating a stigma and myth that 'less educated' people enter the manual trade industry.

White-male laddish culture

Without a doubt, universally, all respondents that participated in our interviews indicated that they perceived the industry to be dominated by white men, which gave the impression that there was no-one like them within the industry and therefore not welcomed. Young women interviewed saw this as a barrier that excludes them from entering into the work culture and subsequently progressing. Two comments that illustrate this observation:

"The industry is dominated by white working class people, and this discourages you because you don't know many people in the sector" (Black African male - South East)

"These jobs are learnt through family members (passed knowledge) you learn on the job and get into the field that way. We have less knowledge compared to white working class counterparts" (Black African female - London)

In summary, we found:

- That some young people perceived the work culture of the manual industry to be quite 'laddish' and they couldn't see themselves fitting into this culture (even if they were in an office environment within the industry);
- That some young people felt they would feel uncomfortable about fitting into the work culture within the construction and manual trade industry. This was especially the case amongst those young girls who participated, especially Asian girls;
- That Black and minoritised ethnic background young people lacked social connections, such as family and friends, within the industry compared to their white ethnic counterparts.

Careers information, advice and guidance

The perception of the young people we engaged, which also reflect findings from studies, is that the construction and manual trades sector mainly relies upon young white males (CABE, 2005; Ahmed et al, 2008; Missa and Ahmed, 2010). Some of the perceived barriers articulated by respondents, on face value at least, suggest that the image of the industry and the careers services and advice on offer, portray an industry that is not sufficiently diverse with regards to gender and race, principally. In the minds of some young people, this impression reflects an industry that is not seen as being as worthy a career path, while simultaneously schools are seen as reinforcing this impression through what some young people described as poor career advice, information and guidance opportunities.

Not having a clear pathway that explains the steps needed to enter the manual trade industry has been identified as a barrier to entering the industry. Though participants were aware of the steps needed to enter other industries and training needed, many were oblivious as to what it would take to enter the manual trade sector; indeed, some were not sure what was included as being part of the manual trades sector. Participants repeatedly mentioned that they do not know where they would come across opportunities within the manual trades industry and could not name a course of training pathway that they have heard about to equip them for this type of environment.

Furthermore, the fragmentation of the construction sector has resulted in creating many trades and small businesses which makes it difficult to monitor good practice. The sector contains many 'self-employed' businesses, and this offers opportunities for the business oriented young person, though not necessarily for those seeking longer term employed situation. For those they would need to engage with medium sized to large companies in the main. There are opportunities, especially around 'contracting agencies' as well as direct delivery options and for those not looking forward to strenuous physical exertions, there are other strands within the sector, especially linked to university and apprenticeships. For some of the young people interviewed, these were options they felt are not being put to them, favouring instead, to paraphrase one respondent quoted earlier, 'they are just pushing academic subjects.'

In summary, we found:

- There was a general lack of knowledge around what institutions provide training courses or accreditations for young people seeking to enter the manual trade industry;
- That while young people generally had a good understanding of manual trade workers being highly qualified, they nevertheless indicated that they didn't know where to start with regards to training or where resources could be accessed if they were to consider an opportunity in the manual trade industry (i.e. scholarships or similar financial support);
- That some young people were unaware of how to access opportunities in gaining insights into the industry, such as work experience and internships.

Diversity and inclusion practice within the industry

The construction industry itself, is finding that it is playing catch-up, especially around policy developments and embracing inclusion as meaningful [23]. From our desk research process, we noted that some companies are starting to embrace diversity and inclusion priorities, though more needs to be done. For example, a number of recent initiatives have been implemented by the industry in an effort to open it up and be more inclusive. To attract diverse talent, the careers advice, resource and recruitment platform, Go Construct, has developed a STEM Ambassadors scheme, offering a platform to showcase the many rewarding opportunities available and helping people from all backgrounds to enter a growing industry[24]. The Go Construct STEM Ambassadors are construction professionals who act as the face of the industry for young people. They engage with young people at educational events across the UK to raise aspirations, illuminate career options and support learning.

The Fairness, Inclusion and Respect (FIR) programme [25] is another initiative which is an industry-wide initiative that aims to make workplaces better for everyone. The programme provides, free, industry-endorsed training and resources, guidance and materials, that supports businesses to be more innovative and profitable by addressing workplace culture challenges, and helps attract, train and retain people from the full pool of talent.

Wates, one of the largest construction and home building companies in the UK, published its first Inclusion and Diversity Strategy in 2019. In this framework they set out an ambitious action plan to become a business where everyone is welcomed, included, and connected by 2025[26].

In December 2021 Multiplex Global, a global building and construction company, launched 'Leave no one behind', a 10-year social equity strategy to tackle inequality and injustice in construction. Their goals are to achieve, by 2030, targets set against a number of priorities listed according to four strategic pillars encompassing: health, safety and wellbeing; diversity, inclusion, and respect; socio-economic value, and respecting communities[27]. Far from leaving things to chance, the industry is starting to respond to charges of an industry that is not inclusive in an attempt to change some of its negative image.

[23] See, in particular, Greater London Authority (2020), Inclusive Employers Toolkit: young Black men in construction and technology; Greater London Authority; and Race in the workplace: The McGregor-Smith Review (2017): Race in the workplace: The McGregor-Smith Review - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk).

[24] Go Construct provides resources for anyone looking for a career in the construction and built environment sector. We showcase the many rewarding opportunities available and help people from all backgrounds to enter an exciting and growing industry which has a huge impact on the UK's housing, industry and infrastructure. The Go Construct website is funded by the CITB levy and operated by the Construction Industry Training Board (Go Construct STEM Ambassadors)

[25] The programme provides free online resources (the FIR Toolkit) and free training workshops. These help employers meet legal obligations around equality, diversity and anti-discrimination and empower people to make their workplace more supportive for all (Fairness, Inclusion and Respect (FIR) Programme)

[26] Diversity and Inclusion at Wates - Wates

[27] Ensuring 'no one is left behind' in the race to net zero | News | Multiplex

Local authority initiatives

At the local authority level, major policy initiatives have been launched in recent years, all with the expressed intention of opening up the construction industry to more people from Black and minoritised communities and women. In London for example, as part of the Mayor's Strategy for Social Integration to improve pathways for under-represented groups in the workplace, the Workforce Integration Network (WIN) was established in 2018. In 2021, the WIN programme focused on supporting young Black men aged 16 to 24 years into significant and substantial employment in London, especially the large London based employers from the construction and infrastructure sectors. Linked to this initiative, Transport for London (TfL) established the Mayor's Construction Academy (MCA) Hub[28].

The Academy was set up to ensure Londoners have the skills they need to thrive in the capital's fast-growing construction industry coordinated across seven hubs established within London to ensure skills supply meets skills demand. The programme aimed to:

1. Boost the number of skilled workers and opportunities in construction, particularly for women and those from Black, Asian and ethnic minority (BAME) backgrounds
2. Provide more high-quality training and initiatives across the capital to give Londoners the skills needed to enter and progress in construction
3. Increase collaboration in the sector, particularly between small and medium sized businesses and construction skills training providers
4. Support the development of training provision for the construction of more precision manufactured housing in London

The MCA Hub works with construction industry employers and representative organisations including, trade bodies, professional institutions, universities and local authorities.

In an attempt to ascertain whether this was just a London initiative, we reached out to 15 elected local authority mayors and nine Metropolitan Mayors to respond to a general question on initiatives they may or may not have put in place that target Black and minoritised young people to access under-represented sectors. The result was astounding in that only one authority responded, Doncaster.

The responding Council [Doncaster Metropolitan Council] has in place a number of initiatives and programmes to "support all of its residents in accessing a wide range of opportunities across many sectors, including the construction sector."

Opportunities includes employment, training and work and a range of impartial information, advice and guidance. Some examples shared as to the types of support available to residents included:

- Employment opportunities in range of sectors and roles at entry level (trainee) from skilled workers, technical and management level.
- Apprenticeships within Doncaster Council which offers a first step on the career for many new entrants, as well as offering an opportunity to retrain and to upskill the existing workforce (e.g. construction, highways, engineering and Street Scene at entry level and higher/degree level).

[28] Careers - this site is closing visit tfl.gov.uk/careers

- Work experience, volunteering and internships within Doncaster Council. The Work Experience Placement Scheme (WEPS) is accredited by Fair Train.

In summary, we found:

- That there was a need for job sites and community networks to more widely advertise opportunities within the manual trade industry (e.g. the WEPS in Doncaster and Go Construct STEM Ambassador scheme) ;
- That those organisations that were working with schools to introduce young people into the opportunities within the construction and manual trades opened up their perception of the sector (e.g. Mayor's Construction Academy, Wates and Multiplex Global, for instance);
- That promoting the opportunities within the construction industry, especially providing entry level training, such as we saw in Doncaster, open up possibilities for upskilling existing staff as well as introduce new opportunities to those showing an interest;
- That a number of large construction companies and local authorities have developed and are implementing strategic policies and infrastructure changes to encouraging a much broader base of workers into the sector (e.g. Wates, Multiplex Global, Transport for London, Go Construct and Doncaster are examples).

There is a journey yet to take place within the industry, which is about challenging negative perceptions and the avoidance of 'standing back from the fireside' guessing how many 'fire sticks are boiling the pot' mentality. Change requires that we recognise the gaps in our knowledge, attitudes and practice in order to change perceived reality. It will therefore require change on the side of the perceiver and the perceived, in this case both Black and minoritised young people and the construction industry. We saw signs that the many high profile companies were starting to embrace and adopt policies and strategies to address concerns over diversity and inclusion, not only construction companies, but some local authorities were implementing initiatives that encouraged access into the manual trade and construction industry generally (we heard from London and Doncaster, for example).

The research has enabled us to start surfacing some critical questions, all of which will require further investigations as they emerged through the process in contrast to a hypothesized starting point. They include:

- Are Black and minoritised young people excluded because of their ethnicity?
- To what extent are different Black and minoritised ethnic groups more likely to work in the manual trades than others?
- To what extent are culture, class and gender strong influences on young people's choices?
- Is the drive to acquire a university degree pushing young people away from a career in the manual trade?

What is clear from this initial research is that we need to better understand the push and pull factors that will entice or repel young people from a career in the manual trades, especially as we move out of the restrictive COVID-19 pandemic situation, from which new opportunities have emerged around digitalisation and online work opportunities.

Recommendations

Based on our key findings, we recommend the following actions that we feel are likely to make a difference in addressing some of the shortages within the manual trades of Black and minoritised ethnic young people. They are:

Parental and community influence:

- to address concerns of opportunities and the value of a manual trades career pathway through community based orientation, understanding and awareness programmes, linked wherever possible with industry approved training providers, delivered through credible and recognised voluntary and community sector organisations.

White-male laddish culture:

- to address this perception, to promote the diverse workforce within the construction and manual trades at all levels, more widely and generally as part of any recruitment and selection strategy. This is very much a communication agenda, and so consideration as to targeting must be considered which could include using different languages as appropriate and relevant.

Careers information, advice and guidance:

- for schools and community-based organisations providing careers information, advice and guidance to adopt a proactive career offer to young people under the age of 16yrs in particular alongside work experience and internship opportunities. Where schools operate 'work experience placements', consideration should be taken to open up new opportunities within the construction and manual trade sector, especially working with sole traders and small businesses, who could offer valuable opportunities as large companies.

Diversity and inclusion practice within the industry:

- to encourage and support those large companies with engagement opportunities in opening up placements, apprenticeships and learning opportunities, including scholarship considerations, where this is viable.

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APPENDIX 1: METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH: DATA CAPTURE AND PROCESS

The field research was based on semi-structured[29] 1-2-1 (n=46) and focus group interviews (n=32) with young people 16 - 24yrs as well as a survey questionnaire, which was randomly distributed through Ubele’s network of organisations across the UK (n=20). Additionally, structured interviews (n=4) and two focus group sessions (n=6) were conducted with professional trades people and one BAME led apprenticeship provider based in London. From these processes, 108 participants overall were either interviewed or responded to the online SurveyMonkey questionnaire between September and November 2021.

Table 1 below provides an overview breakdown of the participants by gender and interview approaches (i.e. survey, 1-2-1 and focus group) while Table 2 provides a breakdown of the practitioners engaged in the process with Table 3 providing an overall composite summary of participants. Figs 1 and 2 provide overall graphic summaries.

Table 1: Overview summary by gender of the young people engaged

Gender/sex	Survey	1-2-1/focus group	Total
Female	10	39	49
Male	9	39	48
Non-binary	1		1
Total	20	78	98

Table 2: Overview summary of the practitioners engaged

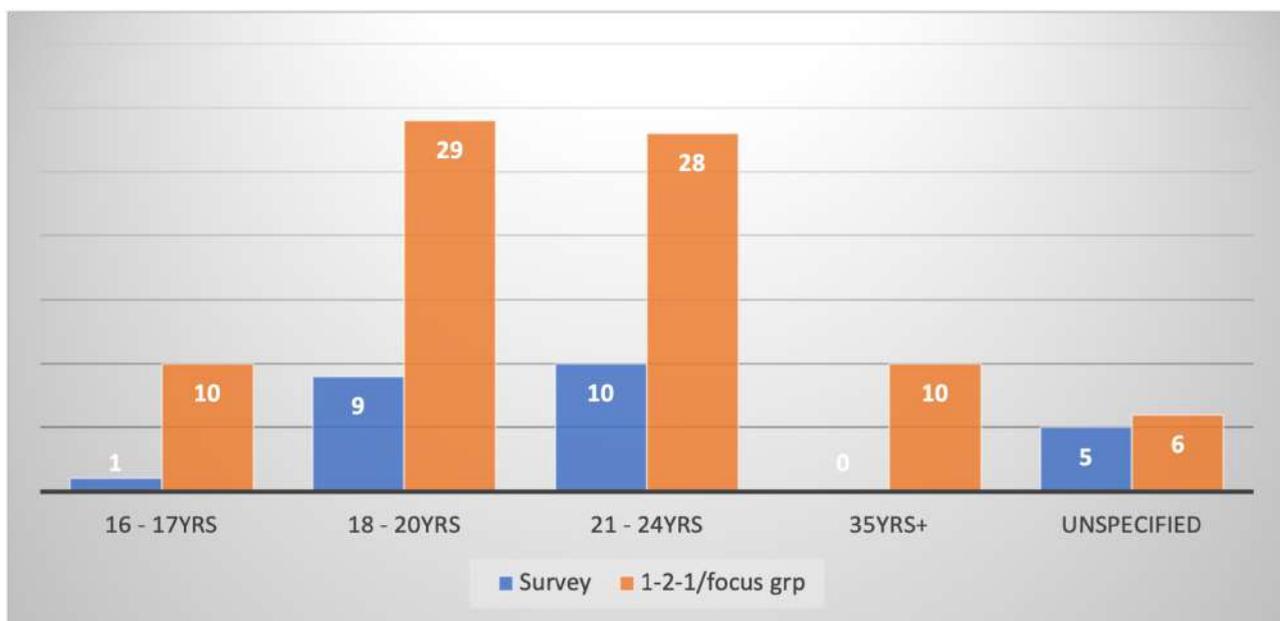
Practitioners	1-2-1 interviews	Focus group	Total
Manual trades professionals	3	6	9
Apprenticeship Training provider	1	0	1
Total	4	6	10

[29] This typically refers to a formal interview process where the interviewer has some latitude in the framing of questions while following a general interview schedule, such as that which would be synonymous with structured interviews (typically interviewees would read out questions as per their schedule with very little - if at all - deviation or ‘extended’ questioning other than contained in the schedule).

Table 3: Overall summary of participants by ethnicity across all phases

Ethnicity	Survey	1-2-1/focus group	Total
Black	5	41	46
Asian	3	31	34
Mixed		5	5
Other	2	9	11
White		3	3
Unspecified	4	5	9
Total	14	78	108

Fig 1: Overall summary of participants by age (n=108)



Two key areas of questions that provided the frame for the interviews included the exploration of:

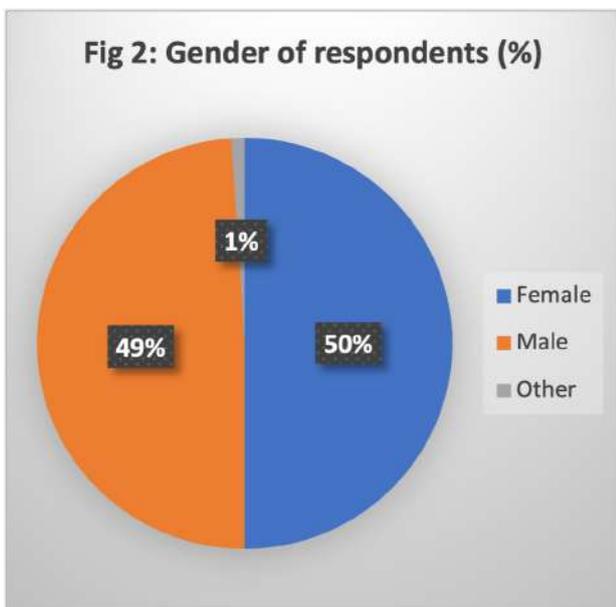
- the experiences of Black and minoritised young people entering and working in the manual trade industry? and
- the main challenges/barriers impacting on and facing Black and minoritised young people in entering the manual trades?

Twelve peer researchers were recruited through open advertisement using the Ubele network and then trained through the CPD endorsed Peer Researcher training programme developed and delivered by Ubele. Each Peer Researcher conducted on average four 1-2-1 interviews and at least one focus group session with up to 4 young people maximum per group (average was 3). Their focus was solely on identifying young people within the age range 16 – 24yrs, and where possible, to direct other young people who were not being interviewed to the online questionnaire (i.e. adoption of a snowballing approach).

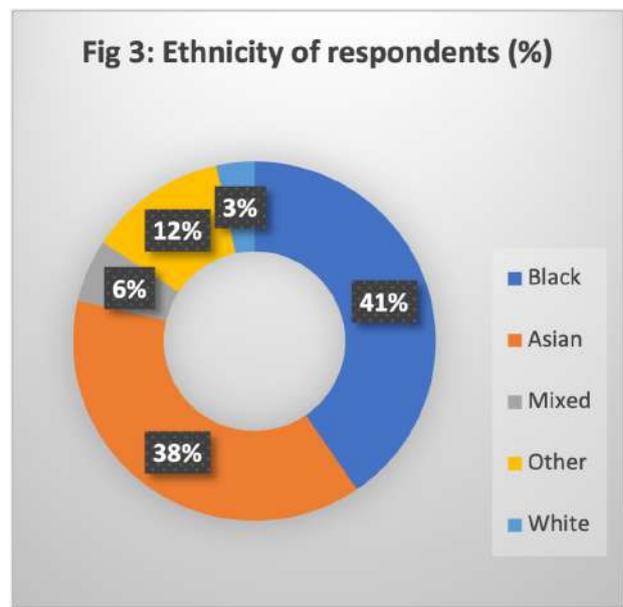
From this process, 78 people participated in the 1-2-1 and focused group processes and 20 completed the online SurveyMonkey questionnaire. Taken together, our field research with young people engaged 98 participants.

Not all respondents provided the information requested, as some chose not to declare and preferred to choose the 'not specify' option where this was provided, especially the online questionnaire (where they had left a question blank, we treated those as 'not specified' or 'not known'). Based on the young people responses received (n=78), the following reflected the key characteristics:

- An equal proportion of respondents indicated being male or female participated (Fig 2)
- The majority of respondents engaged were Black African and Caribbean (41%) and Asian (38%) with 12% indicating that they were 'Other ethnic' groups (Fig 3).
- The overwhelming majority of respondents were aged between 16yrs and 24yrs (87%), the bulk of whom were aged 18yrs and over: 37% (Fig 4).
- Of those indicating their employment status, 35% were in employment (part-time and full-time) while the majority, 53%, were students at college/university and undertaking 'traineeships', including being on the Apprenticeship scheme (Fig 5).
- Eighty percent (80%) of respondents provided information within which region they lived (n=79), from which just under half (48%) lived in London, while 13% came from the East Midlands and 11% from the North West (Fig 6). This provided us with reflections from across different regions and not just London, where Ubele is located[30].

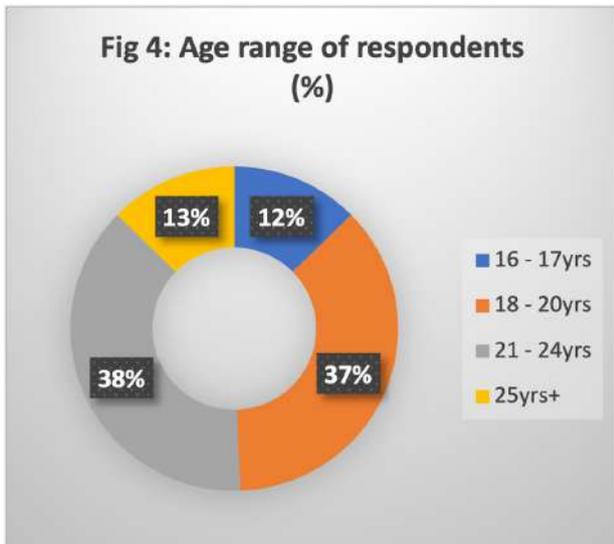


Base n= 98

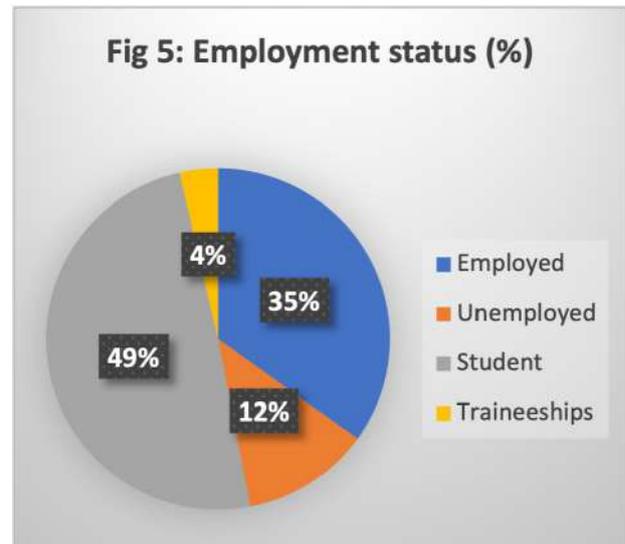


Base n= 98

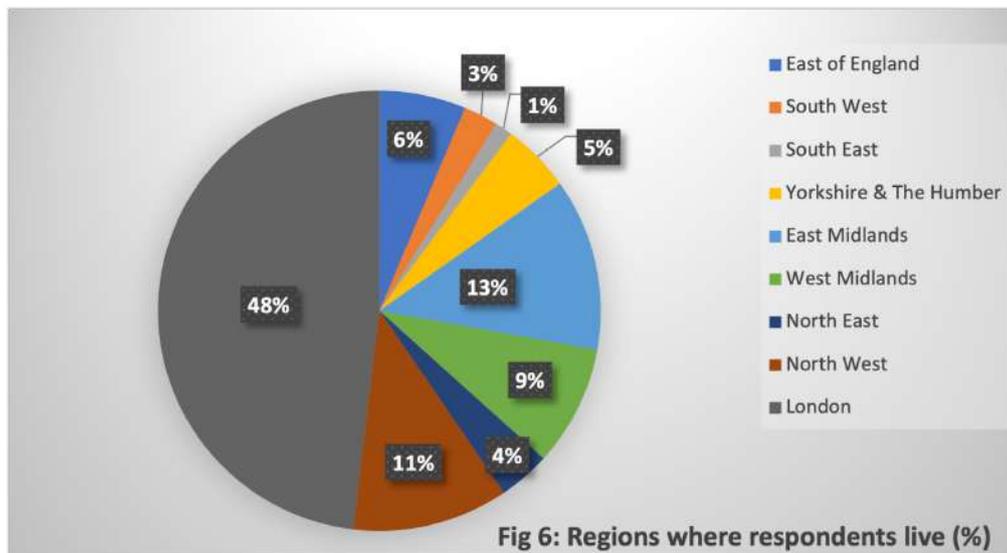
[30] It has been a concern that where organisations are based that they are often seen as reflecting that region or area (Murray, 2020).



Base n=87



Base n=83



Base n=79

Data capture and analysis

Peer Researchers were provided with a data capture schedule which they used to capture information on the participants in terms of gender/sex, regional location, age, ethnicity and education/employment status. This enables us to determine the profile of the participants, ensuring we were reaching those who were meant to be the object of the research (i.e young people between the ages of 16 – 24yrs). The data were then captured on excel spreadsheet, from which we have been able to produce the tables and figures indicated within the report.

Information obtained via the online SurveyMonkey tool were coded to capture the same set of information to ensure consistency at the participant characteristic levels. As this was an online process, we provided some 'open-ended' questions to solicit qualitative feedback from respondents, which was not a mandatory field, which gave respondents the opportunity to comment further in contrast to just providing responses to 'closed-questions'[31].

[31] Open-questions offers respondents the opportunity to respond as they wish while closed-questions are often presented with options from which to choose.

APPENDIX 2: CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY OCCUPATIONAL MAP: AN OVERVIEW

Source: Occupational Maps / Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education



Design, Surveying & Planning Pathway



THE UBELE INITIATIVE

The Ubele Initiative
May 2022