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01

During late 2022 and early 2023, almost 600 UK specifiers took part in our survey about product information. Participants included architects, engineers, surveyors and a range of other design and construction professionals. They work in large and small organisations, in private practice and the public sector. Young people beginning their careers took part, as well as those midway through their working lives and those approaching retirement. Almost a quarter were female – more than in many of our previous surveys.

We are immensely grateful to all those who took the time to provide their views on product information in the context of the critical industry challenges of our time: namely building safety and environmental sustainability. We are also pleased to donate to construction charity [CRASH](#) on behalf of survey respondents. The donation will contribute towards CRASH's work. The charity uses construction resources and expertise to help create places for homeless and critically ill people. For full details on the methodology and profile of those taking part, see sections 6 and 7.

Product information has taken on increased significance in recent years. It has the potential to help create buildings, and other assets which are safe and sustainable, by supporting the decisions of specifiers. High-quality product data, held in the right formats, can also aid the creation of as-built information for asset owners and managers. In this report, specifiers tell us which formats they use and most value. They also tell us how important certification, Environmental Product Declarations and BIM/ digital files are, and what support they need. Much of the Building Safety Act 2022 comes into force this year. This report presents a picture of how prepared specifiers are for it and its associated requirements, such as maintaining a 'golden thread' of information.

The findings in this report will help those supplying products to the construction industry to address the needs of those specifying them by highlighting what information they most need. With the current economic climate in mind, and the resulting pressures on budgets, it is more important than ever to put resource into the most useful information channels. We hope that this report will support construction product suppliers to provide the most effective product data to specifiers, and enable the creation of a safe and sustainable built environment.



02

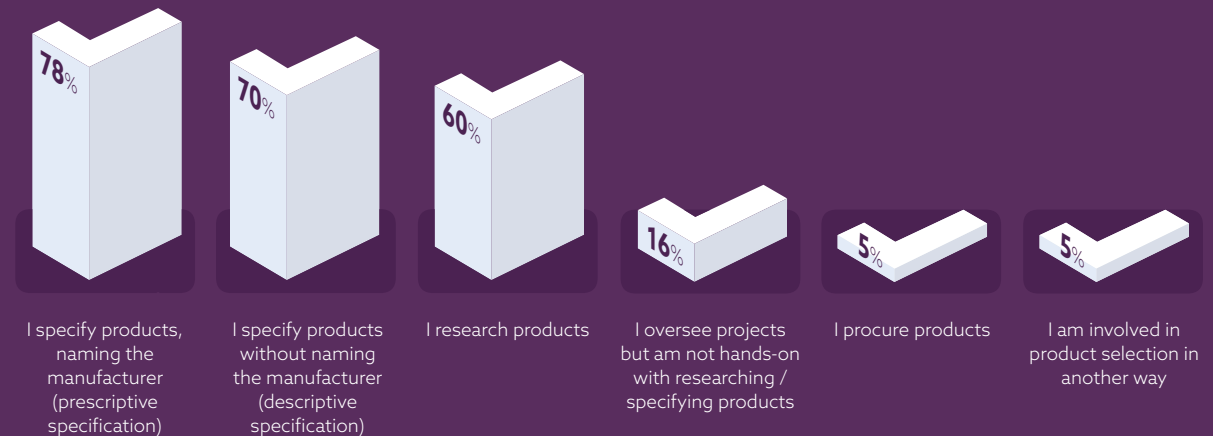
Survey respondents' involvement in product specification

Most of those taking part in the survey specify products – either by naming specific manufacturers (78%) or providing a descriptive specification (70%) – therefore allowing the contractor to make the product choice. Clearly, there is much overlap, as many specifiers will use both approaches – depending on the procurement route, project and product. There are some different findings by organisation size: 88% of respondents in small organisations (with 1 to 15 people) specify named manufacturers, compared with 76% of those in medium (16 to 50 people) and 72% in large ones.

Well over half of respondents research products, while fewer than a fifth are less hands-on but have a supervisory role. Those in the following, architectural roles, are more likely to specify named manufacturers: architects (92%), landscape architects (95%), and technologists/technicians (89%). While 75% of engineers, 59% of surveyors and 29% of BIM/ CAD specialists say they name manufacturers. Those in architectural roles are also more likely to be involved in researching products.

A handful are involved in procuring products. Those that are involved with products in other ways include people with a more strategic remit for using products within their organisation, as well as people in quantity surveying or estimating roles, or specialist consultants.

SOURCES OF PRODUCT INFORMATION



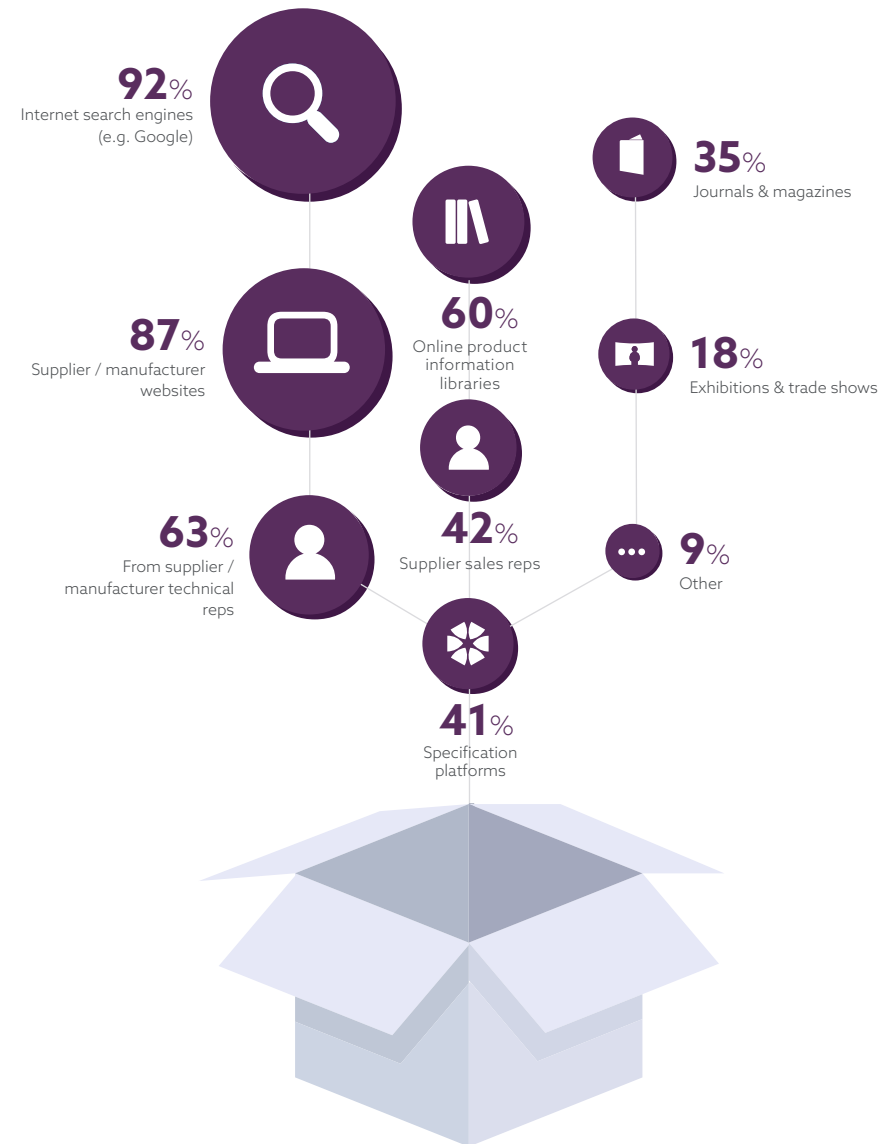
Finding and getting information

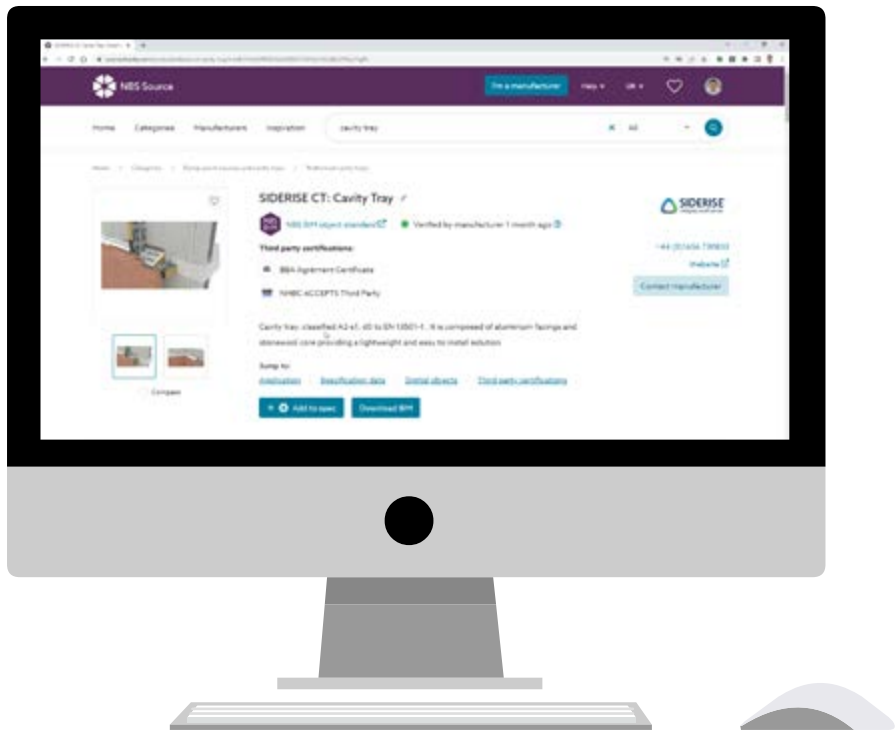
The process of specifying a product usually involves several stages (finding, assessing, comparing, selecting, specifying), and different information may be required at each stage. Internet search engines continue to be used almost universally (92%) as they provide a quick route to whatever information or source is required, which is likely to often include many of the other resources covered in this question. This is quite often a starting point for people. The websites of those supplying products are also used by the vast majority (87%) of specifiers. Neither of these findings is surprising, and these two sources have been the most used in our past surveys.

Beyond those sources, there is an emphasis on technical and structured information, with 63% leaning on the expertise of technical reps (while 42% get information from sales reps). And 60% use online product libraries, which include BIM/ digital files and specification content, such as NBS Source. Just over 41% are using specification platforms, like NBS Chorus, to find and acquire data. This use of technical data sources is more pronounced, as the respondent's organisation size increases. So, the larger the organisation, the more likely respondents are to use technical reps, product libraries and specification platforms.

Other less technical or structured sources are used, but they tend to be used by fewer specifiers: product content in journals and magazines, and exhibitions and trade shows, is used by 35% and 18% of specifiers, respectively. The continued adoption of digital ways of working is likely to explain their limited use, and the COVID-19 pandemic is also likely to be responsible for a reduction in the importance of exhibitions and trade shows in particular (despite some events being held online). Younger professionals were less likely to use journals (22%), which might be a sign of things to come.

SOURCES OF PRODUCT INFORMATION

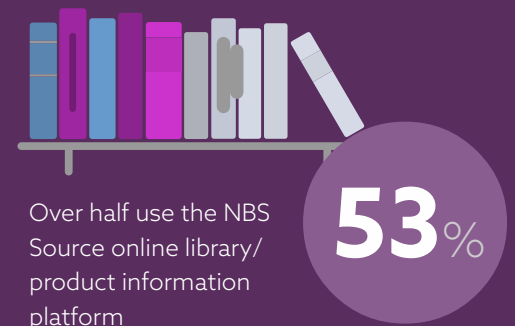




NBS Source

NBS Source is used by over half (53%) of respondents to find, select and specify products – increasing to 71% among technologists/ technicians and 66% among architects. We have just introduced the 'Inspiration' area of Source which showcases products in use, further helping specifiers in the research phase. Specifiers value the wide range of inspirational and structured data that is available, with over 69% agreeing (80% of technologists/ technicians) that they would recommend to manufacturers that they include their products on Source. 29% agree strongly. Respondents aged below 55 are also particularly likely to recommend NBS Source to manufacturers.

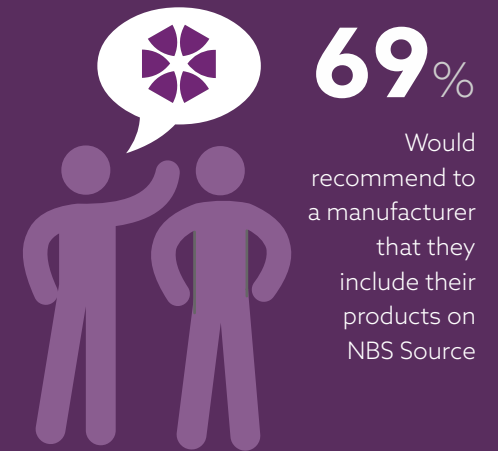
NBS SOURCE USE



SPECIFIERS RECOMMEND NBS SOURCE

'We need manufacturers to provide us with BIM/ digital objects and to make their products available on NBS'

architect

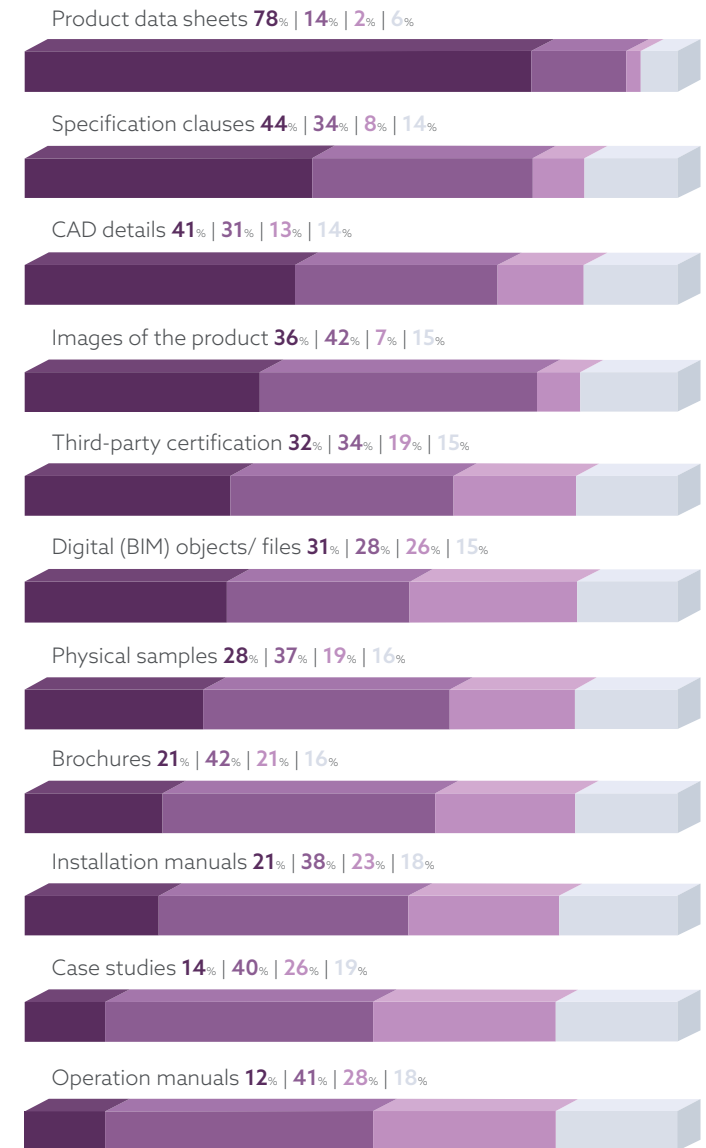
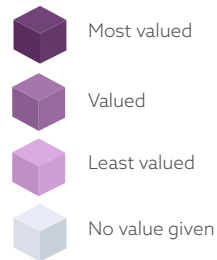


Most valued formats

Product data sheets are by far the most valued format for product information, with 78% of specifiers stating this. Other sources of structured technical information (available in digital formats) also rank highly, with 44% viewing specification clauses and 41% CAD details as very valuable. BIM/ digital files are most valued by almost a third (31%). A similar percentage (32%) say that they most value third-party certification; we'll look at that in more detail below. Specifiers aged over 34 value specification clauses and certification more than their younger counterparts, while the value of BIM/ digital objects increases as specifiers decrease in age. Medium and large organisations are more likely to value specification clauses and BIM files.

Other less structured forms of information are also required: clearly images are valued, and for some types of product these will be especially important. They were also particularly valued by younger professionals, and architects. In some cases, specifiers will want to see a physical sample; although, again, this is likely to be more important for some products than others. Brochures were only 'most valued' by a fifth (21%) of specifiers – quite a way down the ranking of different formats. The result does indicate that this method of communicating information is less important than it used to be. In the past, glossy printed brochures might have been an effective way to market products. However, with the move away from print and the increase in availability of structured, digital data – that can be directly imported into specifications and models – the brochure does seem less relevant. If they are less valued by specifiers, this might represent an opportunity to save money and focus on the formats that they most value.

MOST VALUED FORMATS

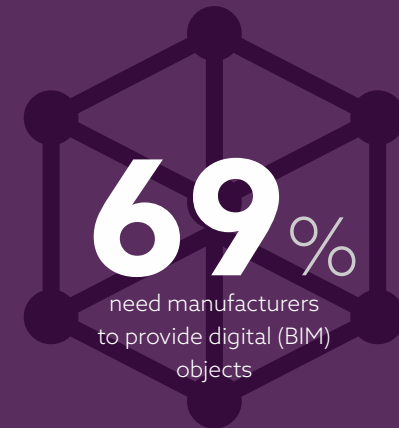


BIM/ digital objects

We have seen the adoption of BIM over the past ten or 15 years, to the point where close to three quarters of specifiers and designers told us that they use it in some way¹. There continue to be discussions about BIM, the relevant standards and its nomenclature. And it continues to evolve, as evidenced by the UK BIM Alliance's rebrand to **nima**, and its dropping of the 'B' to refer simply to 'information management'. While these discussions will most likely carry on, this survey clearly shows that at least one aspect of BIM – the use of digital objects that contain a range of metadata that adds richness to design models – is valued. In fact, for many specifiers, this is business as usual – they want digital objects to be as widely available as possible.

69% agree that they need them, 30% strongly. They want objects to be of a high quality – rich with data but not overburdened with unnecessary, complex geometric information that creates unnecessarily large data files. The groups most wanting digital objects include: respondents aged under 55 (at least 72%), landscape architects (80%), technologists/ technicians (76%) and those working in medium and large organisations (at least 72%).

WE NEED MANUFACTURERS TO PROVIDE US WITH BIM/DIGITAL OBJECTS



¹ NBS Digital Construction Report 2021 (<https://www.thenbs.com/digital-construction-report-2021/>)

It is the comments made in respondents' own words that really demonstrate the value of BIM files to specifiers. There were many requests for BIM, CAD and specification data:

If I can find a product that has a CAD or Revit model, it is more likely that I would specify it

architect

Please provide (at the very, very least) NBS Chorus compliant BIM models and specifications

architectural designer

Provide more BIM objects to be used in a Revit model. I am more likely to specify a product if there's 3D information available, as it saves me time when modelling

landscape architect

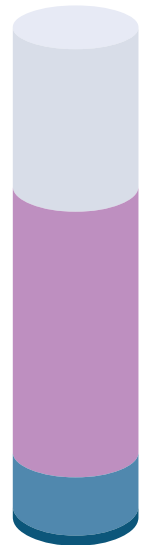
'High quality BIM objects are essential. Many manufacturers produce basic objects to just 'tick the box' which are, in reality, useless. The quality of the objects and the ability of these to reflect the full range of options, sizes, variants, etc. is essential to ensure accuracy and higher-quality coordination between different consultants and subcontractors'

architectural technologist

There were also comments asking for high-quality BIM files, with the right level of information, that could be used in a range of design packages, as well as Autodesk's Revit.

Certification

With the increased focus on third-party certification, we wanted to understand how important this is to specifiers, and whether this is mainly required for 'safety-critical' products. We found that all but around a tenth of respondents think that it is essential for safety-critical products. Just over half (55%) believe that this is limited to safety-critical products, with a third stating that it's essential for all products – a significant minority. We asked specifiers to tell us what improvements they want to see in product information, and this included certification.

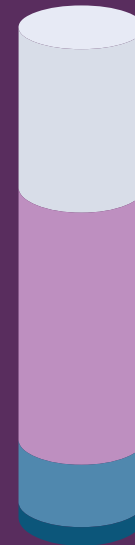


IMPORTANCE OF THIRD-PARTY CERTIFICATION

- 33% Essential for all products
- 55% Essential for safety-critical products
- 9% Useful but not essential
- 2% Other

Environmental Product Declarations

There has been considerable discussion about Environmental Product Declarations (EPDs) recently. 'An Environmental Product Declaration (EPD) transparently reports objective, comparable and third-party verified data about products and services' environmental performances from a lifecycle perspective.² The discussion about EPDs is borne out in the survey results. Almost nine out of ten specifiers say that it is important, when deciding whether to specify a product, that there is an EPD for it. A third say that it is very important.



IMPORTANCE OF ENVIRONMENTAL PRODUCT DECLARATIONS

- 33% Very important
- 54% Quite important
- 12% Not very important
- 1% Not at all important

² <https://www.environdec.com/all-about-epds/the-epd>

There were lots of requests for more and better data that will help specifiers design and specify sustainably. These include EPDs, but also requests for specific metrics, such as embodied carbon, operational carbon, material sourcing, recycling and reuse.

Ensure third-party certification of performance criteria is immediately available. Where testing certificates for fire performance is provided ensure that the exact build up of the testing scenario is included to allow teams to confidently adopt details. EPDs and HPDs are becoming increasingly asked for and should be attached to any product literature'

specification manager

'We are frustrated at how many manufacturers are unable to supply Environmental Performance Certificates and accurate and detailed embodied carbon information. This makes the task of designing zero carbon/ carbon negative development a lot harder than it should be'

architect

Specifiers also value data that supports good information management/ BIM practices, such as data easily exportable to formats such as COBie³, on the basis that this information can be shared and used by people throughout the whole life cycle of the asset:

'Make the information that you provide completely compatible with all of the elements of BIM, including sustainability, carbon, H&S, COSHH, etc. Making the work COBie-compliant³... will also be of great assistance. Remember that once you do this, the time and effort benefits accrued are available for exploitation by many in the design, build, operate and maintain areas. 'Downstream' from them it is a great help. Doing this will bring back customers time and again because they will know that you care'

project and BIM manager

³Construction Operations Building Information Exchange

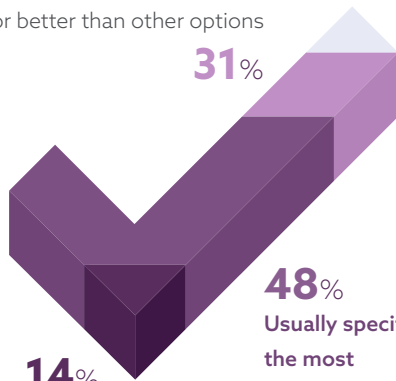
Sustainable products

Given the importance of EPDs, it's not surprising to find that people are keen to specify sustainable products. 14% of respondents said that they almost always specify the most sustainable product, even if other options are much cheaper or perform better. The majority tend to compromise, with almost half (48%) usually specifying sustainably, but not if alternatives are much cheaper or perform better. However, just under a third (31%) need sustainable options to be comparable in terms of cost and performance. Reassuringly, only a small minority do not consider the sustainability aspects of a product. What we need to see is any gap between the price and performance of sustainable products closing and, ultimately, all products being sustainable.

DO PEOPLE SPECIFY SUSTAINABLE PRODUCTS?

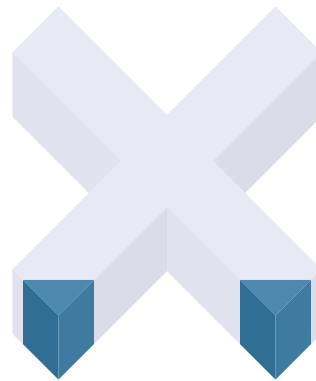
Sometimes specify the most sustainable product but the price and performance would have to be the same as or better than other options

31%



48%

Usually specify the most sustainable product but not if other options are much cheaper or perform better



Tend not to look at sustainability credentials and focus more on other things, like price and performance

7%

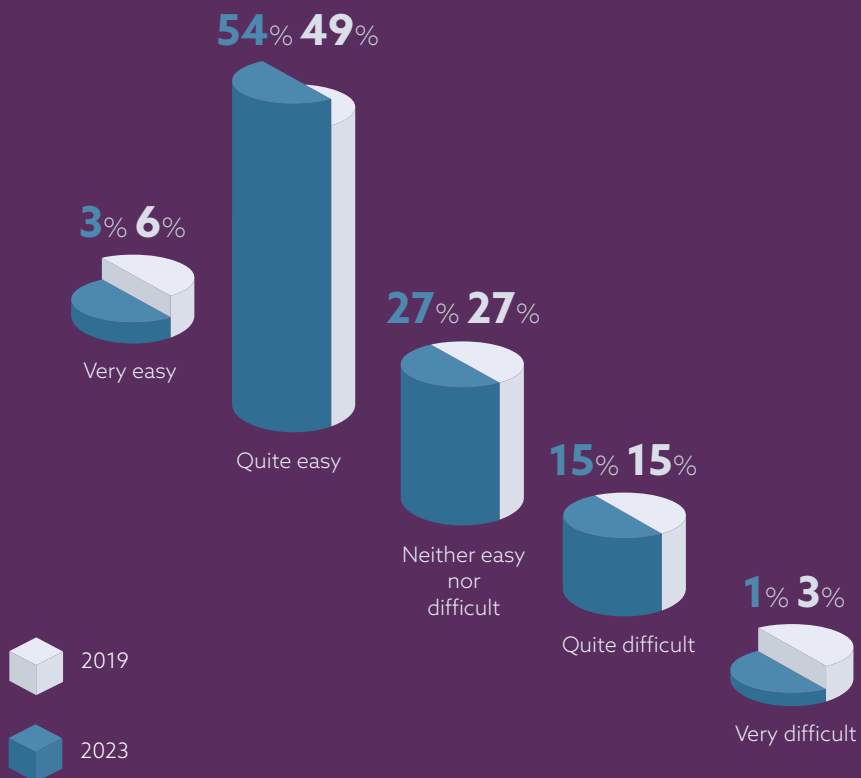
14%
Almost always specify the most sustainable product, even if other options are much cheaper or perform better



Ease of finding information

Specifiers often have to make specification decisions quickly in order to meet deadlines. They need to be able to find information easily in the formats that they most value. While just over half (57%) say that it is easy to do this, only 3% state that it's very easy. And it is difficult for 16%. Moreover, the figures have hardly changed since 2019, suggesting that it hasn't really got any easier to find product information in the last three years or so.

EASE OF FINDING PRODUCT INFORMATION



One respondent described what easy should, perhaps, look like to people working in today's industry and looking for high-quality product information:

'Finding product information, e.g. CAD details, spec [sic], certification, etc. on websites should be as easy as using an iPhone'

architectural assistant

There were a number of comments from specifiers requesting access to technical information without the need to create an account or log in:

'Make accessing the information easier and remove requirement to set up user accounts on their [supplier] websites'

senior construction safety consultant and principal designer

And while pictures and images of products are valued, many specifiers feel that access to technical data on supplier websites could be improved:

'Make access to product data sheets, BBA certificates, etc. easier... Often websites are geared around visuals with important information difficult to find, or required to be requested'

architectural technician

Complex systems

So far, we have looked at how specifiers want to access product information, what formats they need, and the importance of data that helps them specify sustainably. In this section, we focus on some aspects of the product selection and specification process: how specifiers like to collaborate with suppliers, and insights into product substitution.

The information and expertise required to specify products correctly can vary – as the products themselves vary significantly. There is also likely to be considerable variation in the knowledge of specifiers, depending on their experience and area of specialisation. Most specifiers are likely to be confident with relatively simple products: perhaps consisting of one component, or one that they have used before. But when they have limited experience of the product or are specifying a complex system, they may need to call upon the knowledge and expertise of specialist contractors who work with that system on a day-to-day basis. We wanted to better understand what specifiers' approaches tended to be for this.

People's approaches to specifying complex systems vary, but it's clear that the input and expertise of specialists are valued. In just over a third (35%) of cases, specifiers write a descriptive specification, and leave the choice of manufacturer to a specialist subcontractor. Some specifiers still want to select the manufacturer but then work with them on the specification: 35% say that they tend to approach specifying complex systems like this. Fewer – but still nearly a quarter (24%) – of specifiers are confident in completing the specification themselves, while using technical information from the manufacturer.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, the younger the respondent, the more likely they are to leave the choice of manufacturer to a specialist contractor. We also find that specifiers in larger organisations are more likely to leave the choice of manufacturer to the subcontractor. Those in smaller organisations are more likely to complete the specification themselves, while more medium-sized organisations tend to collaborate with manufacturers.

SPECIFYING COMPLEX SYSTEMS

Technical information from the manufacturer is usually enough for us to **complete the specification ourselves**

24%

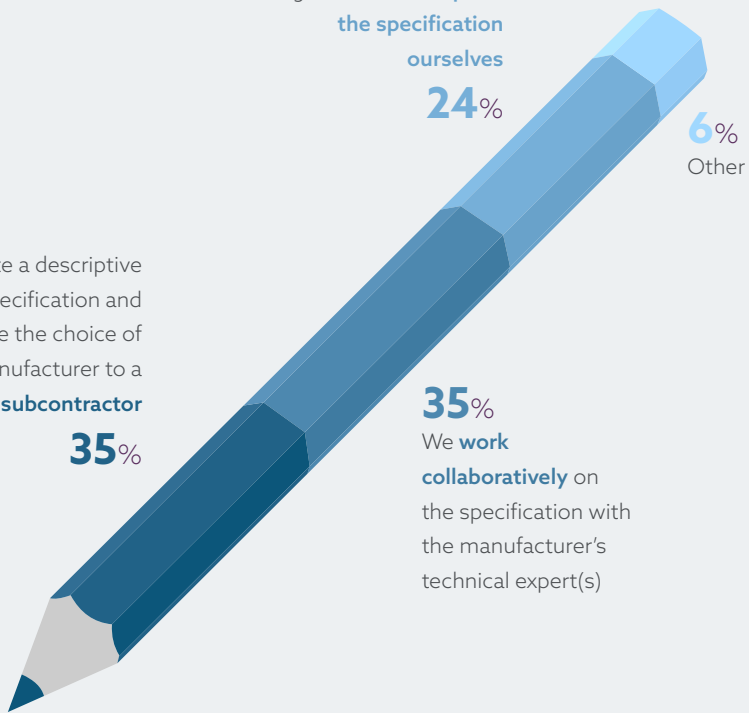
6%
Other

We write a descriptive specification and leave the choice of manufacturer to a **specialist subcontractor**

35%

35%

We **work collaboratively** on the specification with the manufacturer's technical expert(s)



Many survey respondents explained how they work with suppliers to complete the specification. It is clear that many specifiers look to manufacturers to provide technical information, advice and guidance to help them come to the best decision for the project. It indicates a collaborative and mutually beneficial approach, which is encouraging given that the industry has sometimes suffered from an adversarial culture.

'Contact technical reps and describe the project to them and what the product is required for. This helps us to agree a project-specific specification which is appropriate and we know will be technically compliant etc'

senior architect

'Generally commence the specification ourselves in order that we understand the product and type of areas that require further information and help. Then approach the product technical experts when we are able to focus the discussion. However we do also often write a descriptive specification for Specialist Sub-Contract'

director

We select one or two manufacturers who are able to produce the required system. We then contact their technical representative and work through our requirements with them via sketches, drawings and specification clauses

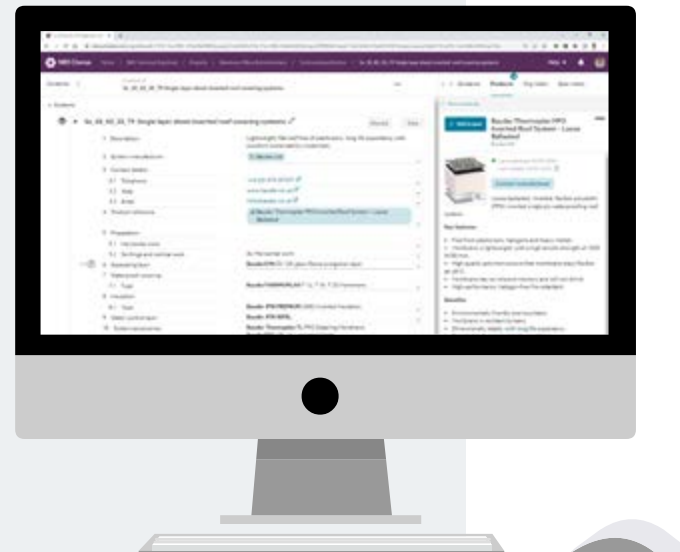
specification writer

'More complex systems are often key to technical design of a project, so we will contact the manufacturer's technical team directly to ensure we develop the complete and optimum design so as to remove the risk of changes being required during construction'

architect

'Early engagement with manufacturers is key where at all possible' - associate director/ architect.

associate director/ architect

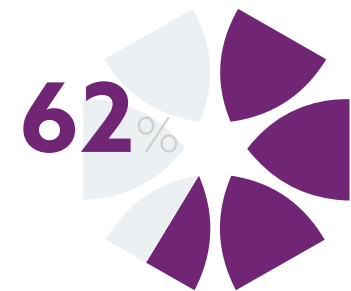


NBS Chorus

Those who collaborate with suppliers to write the specification can use NBS Chorus to do so. A specifier with an NBS Chorus licence – an architect, for instance – can invite someone from another company. The professional that they invite could be another consultant (like a structural engineer) or a manufacturer. The person who is invited will then have access to the relevant section or clause in NBS Chorus to complete it. With Chorus being cloud-based, both parties can work together from completely different locations. This is an efficient and collaborative way of developing specifications, supporting the industry's move away from a traditionally adversarial culture.

With 62% of specifiers saying that they use NBS Chorus to specify products, this represents a great opportunity to suppliers. They can work together with specifiers to ensure the appropriate and accurate specification of their products.

NBS CHORUS USE



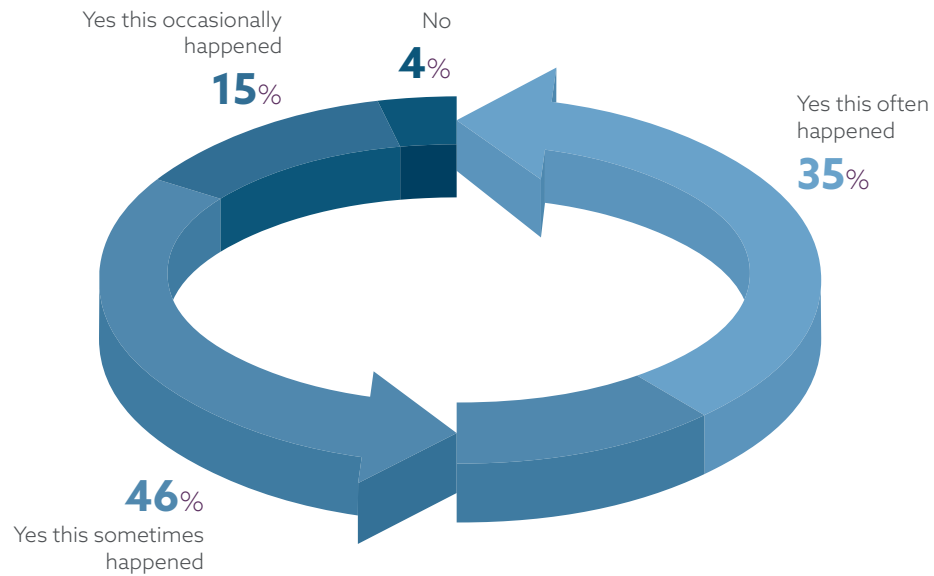
Specify products using NBS Chorus

Substitution

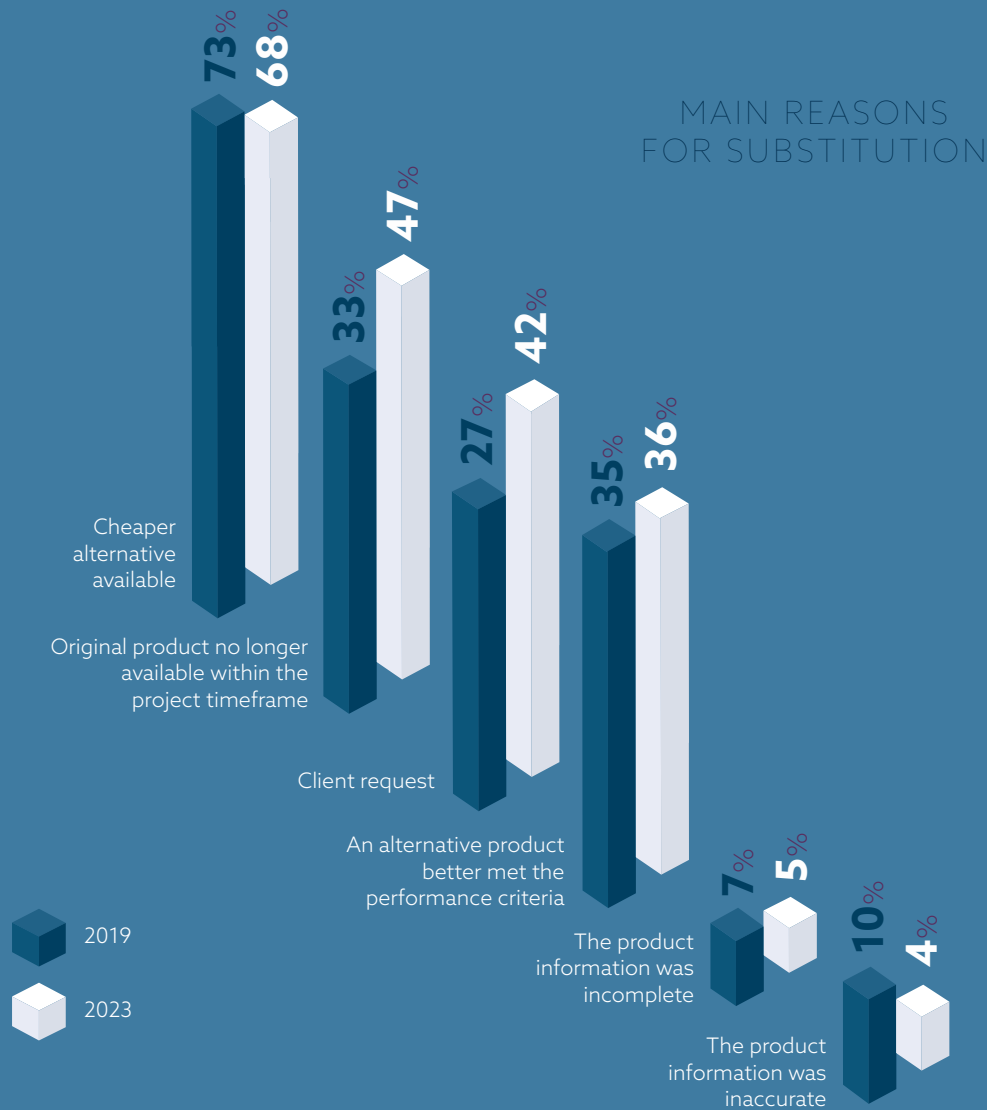
A collaborative approach that leads to the creation of a complete, up-to-date and accurate specification is likely to help that specification 'stick'. The argument being that the most appropriate product has been specified, and that all the information which the contractor needs is there.

However, we can see that substitution does still happen regularly. Value engineering is part of the specification process and contractors will, naturally, seek to get the best deals when procuring products, as long as the product performs as required.

FREQUENCY OF PRODUCTS SUBSTITUTED IN THE LAST 12 MONTHS



Substitution has commonly related to the price that the contractor can get for an alternative product being lower than the one specified. This doesn't appear to have changed, with a 'cheaper alternative' being the most common reason for substitution, as stated in this survey. However, lack of availability is cited more often than in previous surveys – reflective of the supply chain issues that have been reported recently. Client requests also appear to have become a more common reason for substitution.



Leads & insights via Glenigan

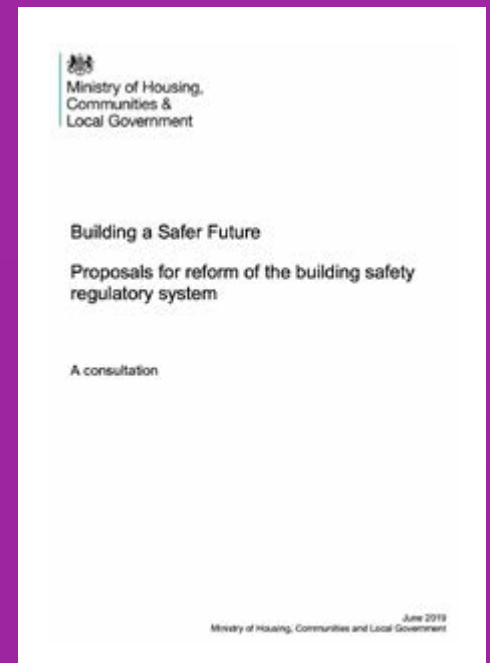
Where a proprietary product has not been specified and the decision is left to the contractor, subscribers to NBS Source can now add the 'Leads and Insights' feature to their subscription, via our sister company [Glenigan](#). This feature provides project information such as the contractor appointed to the project, allowing suppliers to contact them and follow the specification throughout the project timeline. Even where a named product has been specified, the supplier has the opportunity to contact the contractor and build a relationship with them. They could potentially discuss pricing options and provide technical support, thereby strengthening the chance of maintaining their product in the specification when the contractor comes to procure it.



04

Since the Grenfell Tower fire, changes to regulations and guidance have been introduced to create a safer built environment. The Building Safety Act received royal assent on 28th April 2022, with full implementation by October this year. This will entail more stringent responsibilities for duty holders at specific project gateways, when working on higher-risk buildings (defined as those over 18 m or 7 storeys, with 2 or more residential units). If the responsibilities at each gateway are not met, the project will not be allowed to progress, and the penalties for not following procedure will be more serious than they were prior to the legislation. Given this, we wanted to understand how well specifiers understand the Act and what they will need to do. We also asked about their knowledge of the 'golden thread' of information.

There has been much talk about the need to improve product information, and the culture of the industry, when specification decisions are made. Therefore, we have asked specifiers whether they believe that the culture of the industry has improved in this respect.

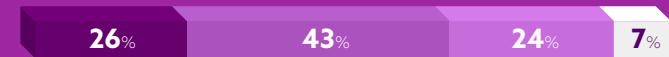


Building Safety Act

Just over two thirds (69%) of specifiers are clear about the types of project that fall within the scope of the Act, with 26% being very clear. This is encouraging, but it does leave 31% who are not clear. These numbers are less positive in terms of those understanding the responsibilities of duty holders for the three gateways, with 57% clear about these (18% very clear), and 43% not clear. Similarly, respondents' understanding of what they need to do if they carry out a project that falls under the Act: 57% were clear (17% very clear), and 43% not clear.

CLEAR ABOUT THE BUILDING SAFETY ACT?

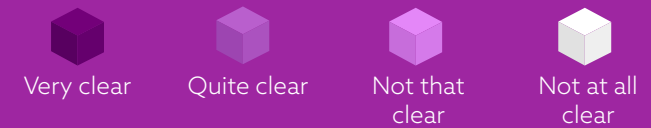
The types of project that fall within the scope of the Building Safety Act



The responsibilities of the duty holders for the three gateways, as defined in the Building Safety Act



What you need to do if you carry out a project that falls under the Building Safety Act





Some specifiers say they do not work on projects that fall within the scope of the Act and are unlikely to do so; some of these respondents feel that it may be less critical that they understand what their responsibilities would be. However, there may be some specifiers who will take on a higher-risk residential building for the first time and need to understand the Act. There has also been some discussion suggesting that the scope might be widened in the future, so people will need to keep abreast of what the Act covers.

'It will have little effect unless the nature of our projects changes, we work on existing, older smaller and low-rise buildings generally'

architect
director

'It will affect everything... Those who think it will not are misleading themselves, the profession and their clients'

director
(architectural practice)

'It will make life much more difficult as the necessary information is often not easy to find and is obfuscated'

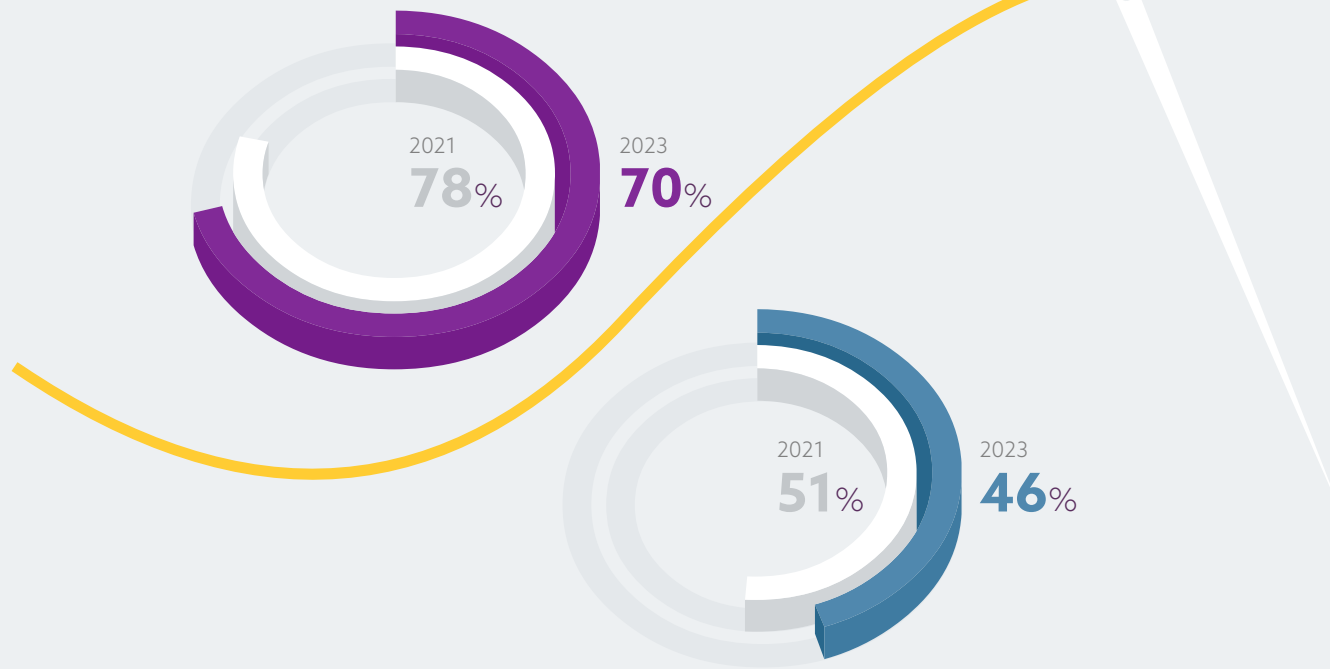
architect

The 'Golden Thread'

As part of the secondary legislation of the Act, those working on construction projects will need to maintain a 'golden thread' of digital information throughout the life of the project. So, do specifiers understand what this means for them?

70% of specifiers believe that they need to be working digitally to play their part in realising the golden thread of information. While this is a majority, it is eight percentage points lower than when we asked specifiers in 2021⁴. That leaves a quarter who do not have an opinion either way or are unsure, and 5% who disagree. This is despite the legislation stipulating that the information should be held digitally. Respondents are less clear about how they will manage information to play their part in realising the golden thread, with 46% agreeing with the statement and 16% disagreeing. This does not appear to have improved since 2021.

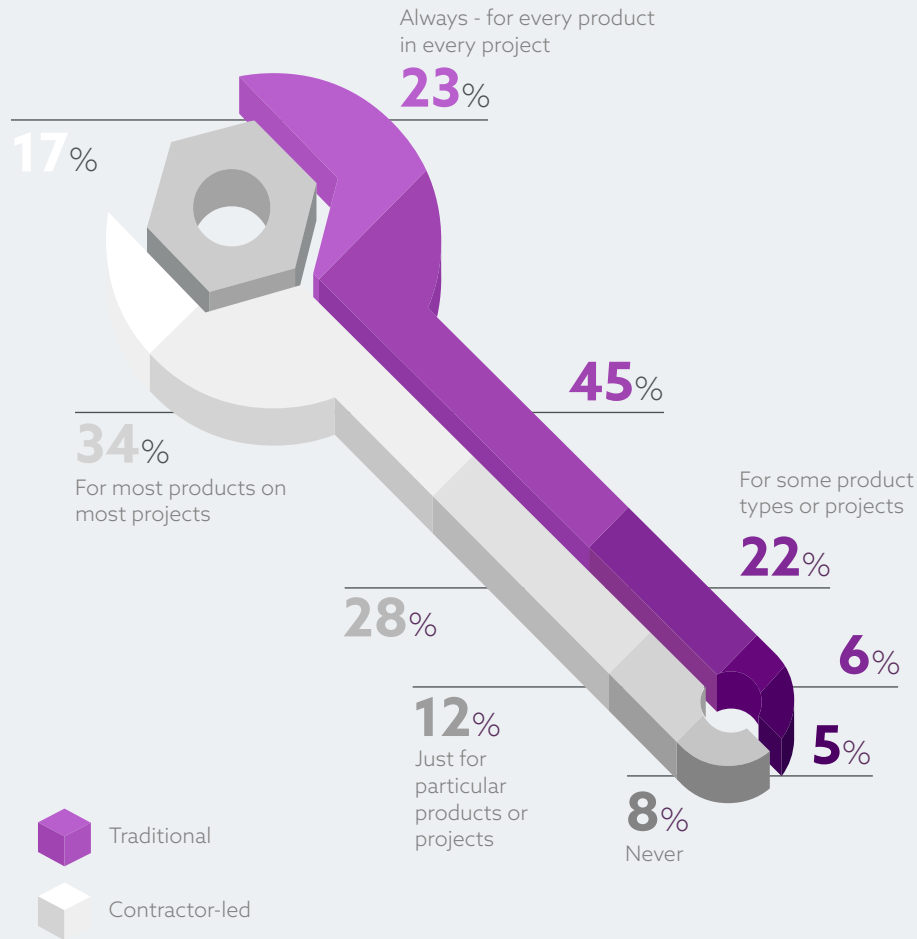
WE NEED TO BE WORKING DIGITALLY TO
PLAY OUR PART IN REALISING THE GOLDEN
THREAD OF INFORMATION



WE ARE CLEAR HOW WE WILL MANAGE
INFORMATION TO PLAY OUR PART IN REALISING
THE GOLDEN THREAD OF INFORMATION

⁴NBS Digital Construction Report 2021 (<https://www.thenbs.com/digital-construction-report-2021/>)

HOW OFTEN VERIFIED THAT SPECIFIED PRODUCT INSTALLED: TRADITIONAL VS CONTACTOR-LED



Verifying installation

Part of maintaining a golden thread of information is to ensure that there is a record of what products were finally installed. With a prescriptive specification, products may possibly be substituted. In a design-and-build, contractor-led project, the choice of product may well have been left to the contractor. In either case, it is not certain that the version of the specification handed over to the contractor represents what has actually been installed in the final building. This needs to be verified, and we wanted to find out how often specifiers did this.

On traditional projects, the specifier works directly for the client, completes the full design and hands it over to the contractor. For these, we find that almost a quarter (23%) always verify all products that are installed. A further 45% do so most of the time. For contractor-led projects, the specifier doesn't verify installation as often, although this may be due to the responsibility for doing so being less clear. For instance, a different designer from the original concept designer being commissioned to work for the contractor to complete the detailed design.

We have received feedback in the past that there is limited allocation of fees to cover verifying installation, or that it's not always clear whether the contractor or designer/ specifier should do this. When margins are tight and time is in short supply, it can be a challenge for project teams to ensure that a final as-built record is created before the asset is handed over. Perhaps this is another area where suppliers can provide support. The more structured the product data is, the easier it is to update or import it into a specification or model when changes are made. Using NBS platforms can help here. As NBS Chorus integrates with the most-used modelling applications in the UK, it is then easy to ensure that the specification and modelling data are coordinated. If suppliers provide specification clauses and BIM/ digital files, it's easy for the specifier to import them directly into NBS Chorus and their chosen design/ modelling software, and therefore ensure that the two types of information are coordinated.

Industry culture & change

Dame Judith Hackitt, in her foreword to 'Building a Safer Future', described cultural issues in the sector creating a 'race to the bottom'. There are problems with ignorance and indifference to the regulations and guidance that are designed to achieve high-quality buildings. She also mentioned the need for transparency of information and an audit trail, as well as a need for collaboration. With these in mind, we wanted to get a sense of whether specifiers believe that the culture of the industry has changed for the better over the last five years.

Some specifiers think that the culture of the industry has improved, with almost half (48%) agreeing that this is the case. But only 7% strongly agree, while 15% disagree, and over a third (37%) expressed a neutral view. When referring specifically to the accuracy and quality of construction information, the view is more positive, with 63% believing that this has improved. Again, though, only 14% strongly agree that this is the case, and there are some who disagree (10%).

The comments that respondents made in their own words provide a fuller picture of how they see the current industry culture.

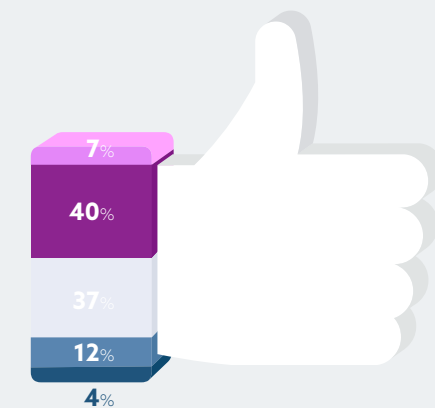
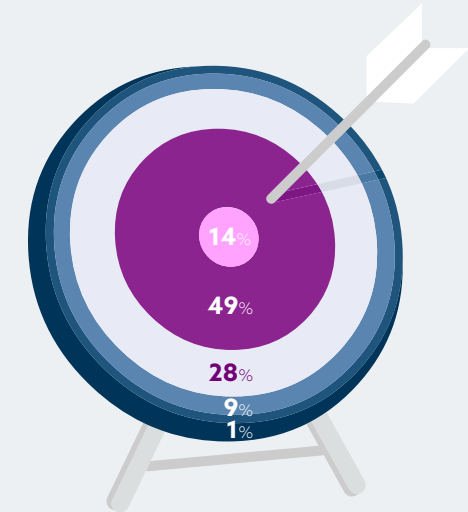
'... it's very hit and miss on different sections of the industry changing their own culture. We are trying to specify better / smarter but money is still king; clients don't have the money to build better; sections of contractors (QS teams) will race to the bottom, rather than provide best quality, more robust elements for a longer service life. We end up with compromises that are still legally acceptable but questionable in the long run. There is much talk of industry change at high levels but little is changing in terms of what is delivered for end users'

technical lead

'As legislation becomes tighter, information can be more difficult to access... Taking responsibility seems to be waning. Divergence from EU certification and standards will only make the ability to specify the correct products more difficult and time consuming'

senior technologist

THE ACCURACY AND QUALITY OF CONSTRUCTION PRODUCT INFORMATION HAS IMPROVED IN THE LAST FIVE YEARS



IN THE LAST FIVE YEARS, THE CULTURE OF THE CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY HAS CHANGED FOR THE BETTER

05

The responses to this survey (particularly those in specifiers' own words) illustrate the challenges that they face in working to create safe, sustainable buildings. There is much change to keep up to date with – in terms of products and systems, and relating to – the new legislation. This means that they are faced with vast amounts of information, and specifiers need to be able to find what they need quickly. Often this means clear, transparent, structured data – in the form of data sheets, specifications and high-quality BIM/ CAD files. It also means high-quality manufacturer websites, and access to experienced technical reps.

Third-party certification for safety-critical products and Environmental Product Declarations are also important. Specifiers are requesting this information to help them specify safely and sustainably. They also value the expertise and knowledge of product manufacturers, and many are keen to work together to ensure that the right product is selected and correctly specified.

NBS provides a platform for both specifiers and suppliers to collaborate. Product data is surfaced in the formats that specifiers need. This includes specification data in NBS Chorus and NBS Source that can be added straight to the specification – saving specifiers time and reducing scope for error. Manufacturers can help specifiers write their specifications within Chorus, further reducing the likelihood of inappropriate or inaccurate specification. BIM/ digital files can be downloaded from NBS Source, imported into design packages and coordinated with the specification. Alongside these data formats, manufacturers can provide certifications, and extensive performance and sustainability data. All of this is structured and searchable, helping the specifier find the information that is most suitable for their project; and helping suppliers to demonstrate the performance characteristics of their products.

A lot of specifiers find it easy to locate the information that they need, but not enough progress has been made here. Few find it very easy and, while there is tentative agreement that the industry is improving culturally, there is a sense that improvements in access to good product information are limited. Specifiers generally want to specify products that will improve sustainable outcomes, but cost and other constraints still present a barrier. The requirements of the Building Safety Act are only going to increase the need for trusted, accurate and digital forms of product data. By providing access to this information, suppliers will be supporting specifiers while helping the industry become more collaborative, safer and sustainable.

591 UK built environment professionals completed the survey. They primarily work in organisations providing design and consultancy services.

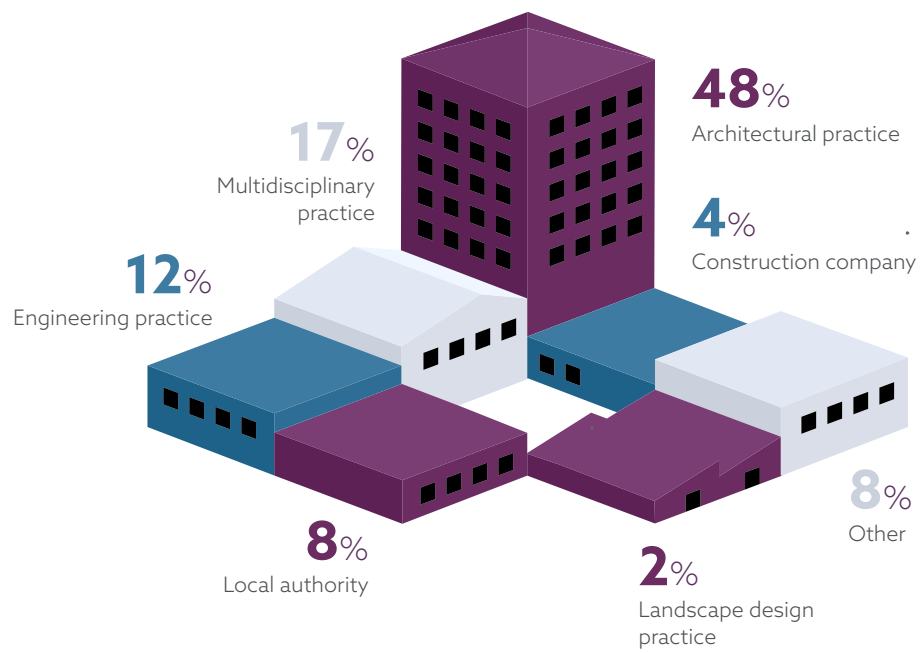
Almost half of respondents work at architectural practices (48%), but multidisciplinary and engineering practices are well represented too. While most professionals are based in the private sector, 8% (45 respondents) work in local authorities. And, as well as organisations providing design services, some 4% (26 respondents) work in construction firms. 'Other' organisations included: building and quantity surveyors, project managers, specialist contractors and other public sector organisations, such as education, health and housing providers.

ABOUT RESPONDENTS

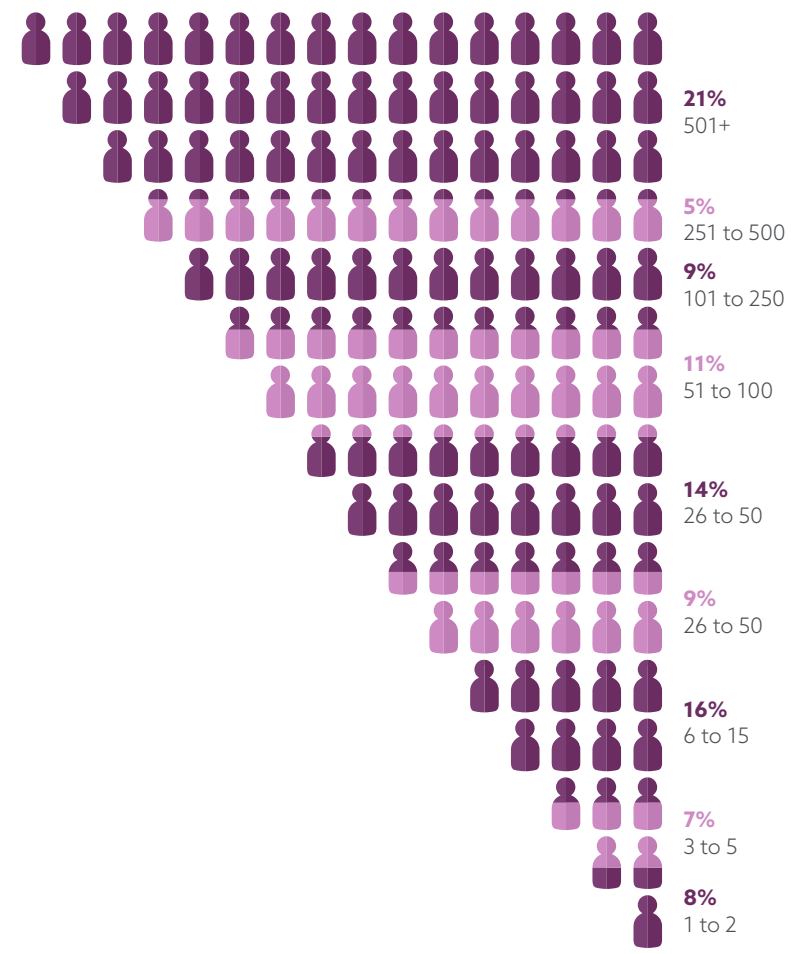
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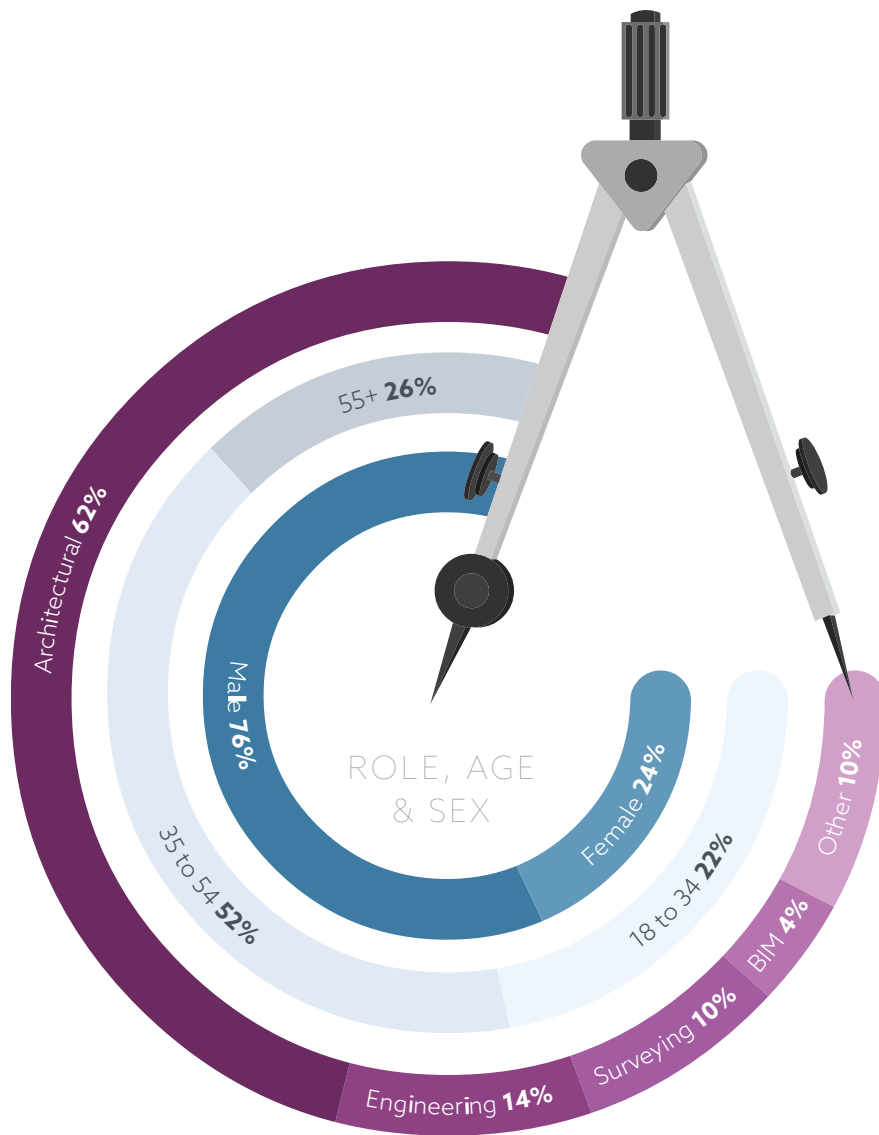
The respondents represent the full range of organisation sizes – from those micro-businesses with only one or two people to those with over 500 staff, and everything in-between.

TYPE OF ORGANISATION



ORGANISATION SIZE: NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES





Individual respondents are primarily in a range of design and consultant roles. Well over half are in architectural roles (62%); this includes architects, architectural technologists, architectural technicians and landscape architects. However, 14% are engineers (mainly services and structural) and 10% surveyors. Some (4%) are BIM/ CAD specialists. 'Others' included planners, interior designers and facilities managers.

The sample represents the full spectrum of age and experience: from young professionals in the early stages of their careers to experienced professionals, and those near the end of their careers.

Over three quarters (76%) of respondents are male: an approximate reflection of the industry as a whole. However, the figure of 24% (133 respondents) of females is slightly higher than in some of our previous surveys. Two people identified as another gender.



During late November 2022 and mid January 2023, we conducted an online survey with 591 UK designers and specifiers about how they find the product information that they need, and their associated views.

We invited people to complete the survey by sending email invitations to construction industry professionals working in the built environment in the UK. We also shared the survey via our newsletter, and by posting on social media. Many of those who took part were NBS customers, but many were not – giving us a picture of the views of construction design and other professionals working in the UK generally.

For every completed response we received, we donated £1 to charity CRASH, which helps homelessness charities and hospices with their construction projects by channelling professional expertise, construction products and donations.

As part of our analysis, we have analysed results by respondents' firmographic and demographic characteristics, such as organisation type and size; and individuals' role, discipline and age. Where this analysis revealed findings of note, we have included them in the report. For some questions, we have been able to provide some indications of trends over time.

The overall sample size is n=591. Unless stated, this (or a slightly lower number) will be the base size on charts. The slightly lower number is explained by a small number of respondents who have sometimes not answered a question. Or, where appropriate, respondents answering 'don't know', 'prefer not to say' or 'not applicable' have been removed.

In some cases, percentages may not add up to 100%. This is due to rounding to whole numbers, or where respondents could provide more than one answer.



NBS is a global technology platform that combines quality content and connectivity for anyone involved in the design, supply and construction of the built environment.

Every year, hundreds of thousands of products get specified through NBS, by thousands of leading practices worldwide. For architects, engineers, designers and contractors, NBS' specification platform enables them to work smarter and reduce their risk.

For construction product manufacturers, NBS is a digital marketing platform, exposing your products to decision makers across the construction project timeline, making it easy for specifiers to find, select and specify your products. Product data on NBS is structured, filterable and searchable, with the potential to include rich metadata demonstrating the performance capabilities of your product. This helps specifiers to find the most appropriate product for their project and to access information that you, as a supplier, have provided.

Sustainability at NBS

NBS, as part of the Byggfakta Group, recognises the importance of sustainability. As such we endeavour to help the construction industry build sustainably and have taken steps to improve our own carbon footprint.

To find out more about what we are doing visit: <https://www.thenbs.com/about-nbs/our-approach-to-sustainability>

To learn more

Visit: theNBS.com/manufacturers

Email: manufacturers@theNBS.com

Call: 0345 200 1056

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We want to hear from you

We'd love to here your feedback on this report, [Please click here](#) to share your thoughts.

