

Health in construction research

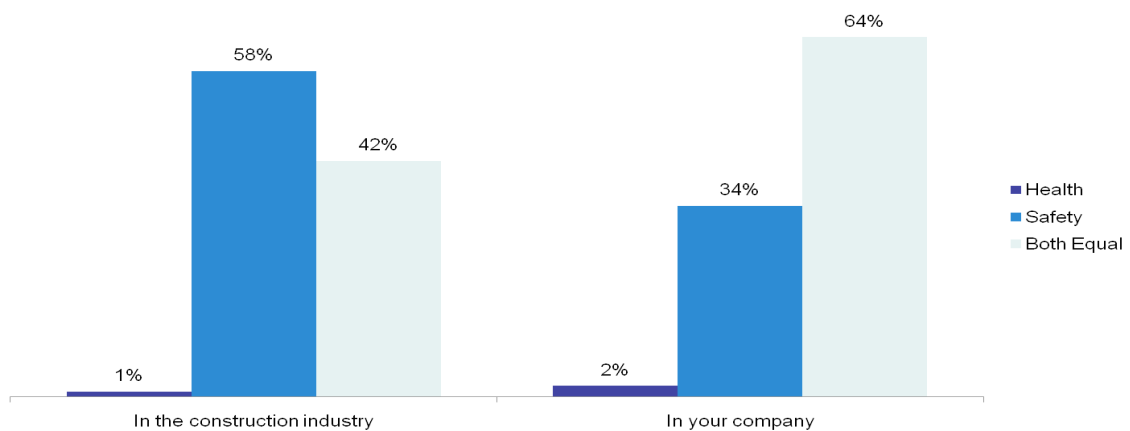
Constructing Better Health recently commissioned research into the attitudes towards health at construction companies.

The results from more than 750 construction companies reveal significant gaps in health surveillance and assessment.

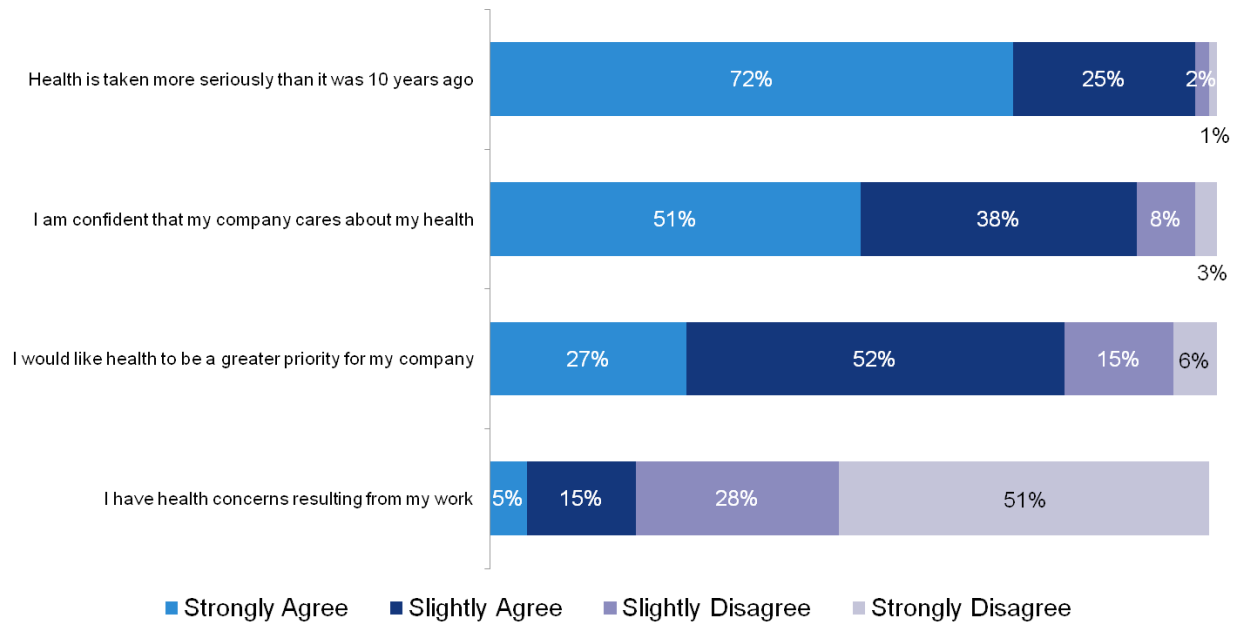
Perceptions of health in the construction industry

The general opinion from the survey is that safety is deemed more important than health in the construction industry. However, when commenting about their own companies, almost two thirds (64%) of respondents felt health and safety were given equal importance. While the responses would indicate that health is taken more seriously than it was, the majority (79%) still want health to be given a greater priority.

Q. Health and safety is a growing concern for the construction industry.
From your experience, which one is treated with most importance?

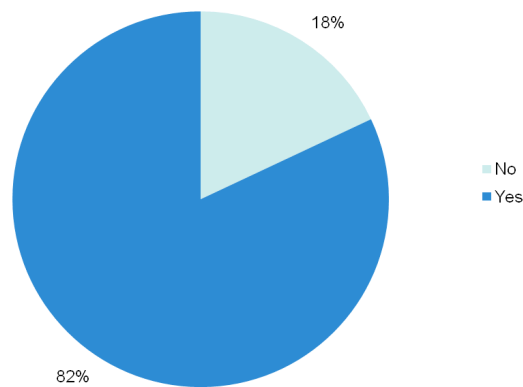


The majority of respondents (72%) believed health is taken more seriously now than it was a decade ago, but 79% still want health to be a greater priority.



A high proportion (82%) of respondents believed occupational health to be as important as safety on a construction site.

Q. Do you perceive occupational health on site to be as important as safety issues on site?

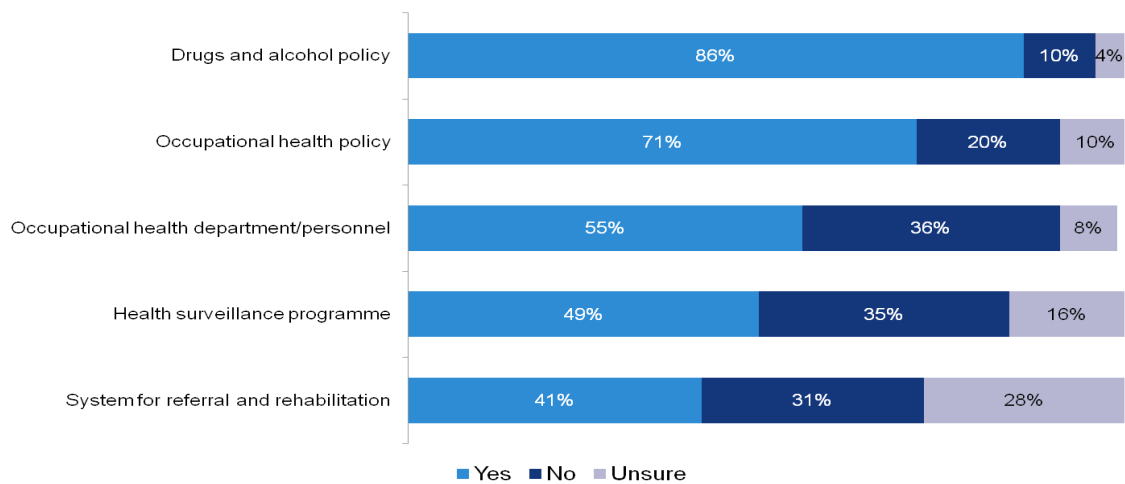


What health policies and procedures are in place?

A health surveillance system is essential for workers who are likely to come into contact with hazardous substances, or be exposed to noise, vibration or radiation through their work.

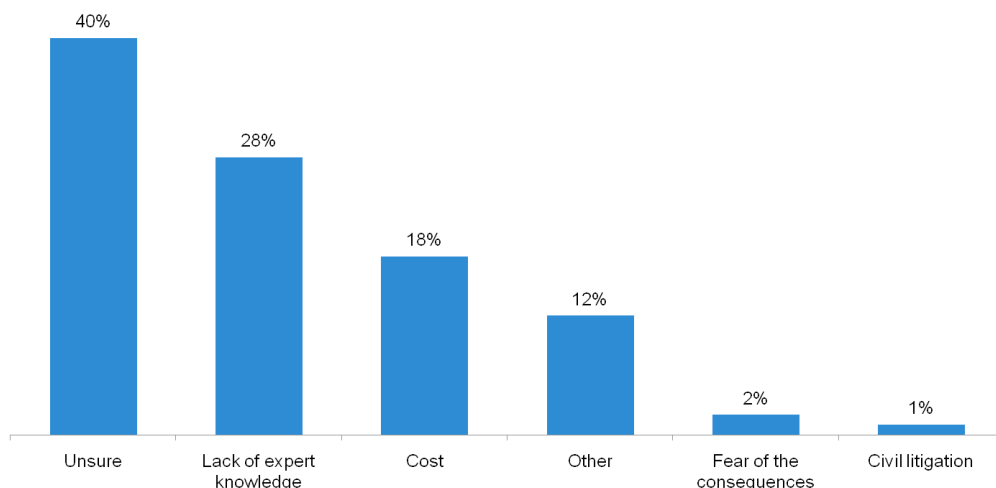
Just under half (49%) of respondents claimed to have health surveillance policies in place, of those that didn't have one, 40% were unsure why this was the case and 28% felt it was due to a lack of expert knowledge.

Q. Does your company have the following in place?



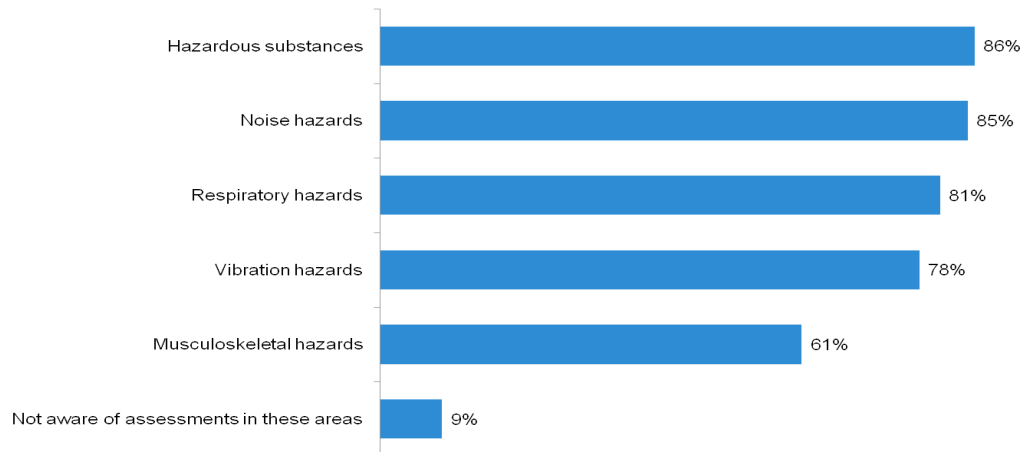
Over a quarter of those whose companies do not have a health surveillance programme in place, believed this was due to a 'lack of expert knowledge'. However, many were unsure of the reason.

Q. Why do you think your company has not implemented a health surveillance programme?



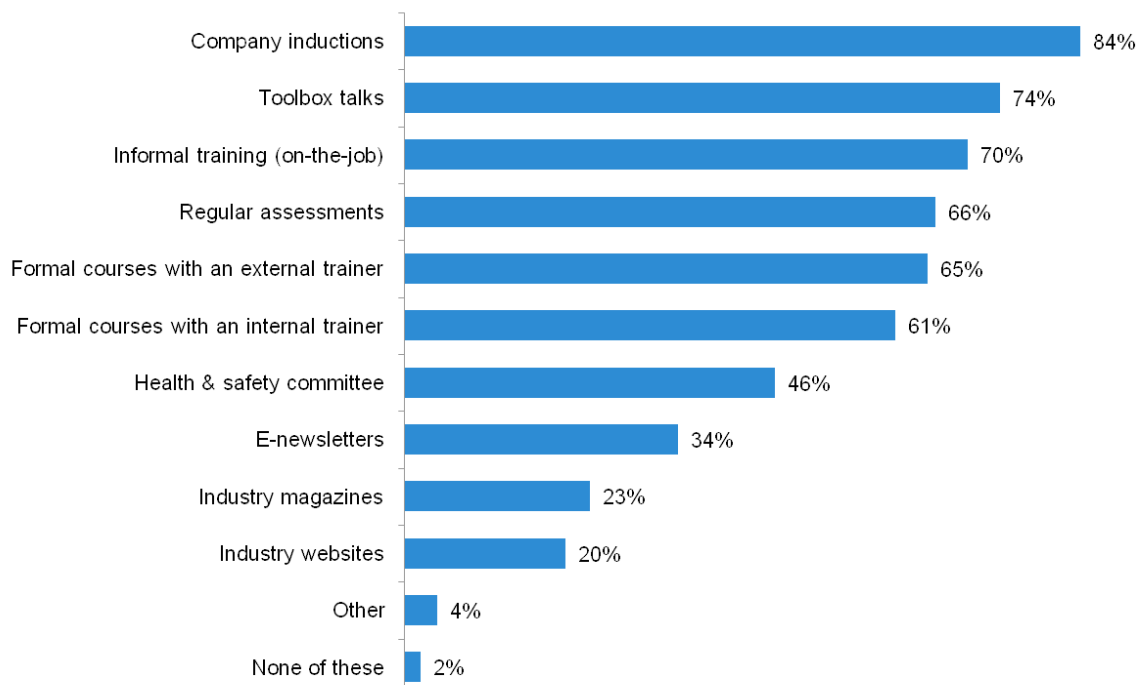
Musculoskeletal conditions are common in the construction industry and are estimated to cost UK society £5.5 billion every year. They are also thought to be responsible for a quarter of the working days lost through absence. The survey shows that musculoskeletal hazards are the least assessed, compared to hazardous substances (86%), noise hazards (85%), respiratory hazards (81%) and vibration hazards (78%).

Q. To your knowledge, are health risk assessments undertaken for the following areas?



Company inductions and toolbox talks were found to be the two most popular methods of internal health & safety communication.

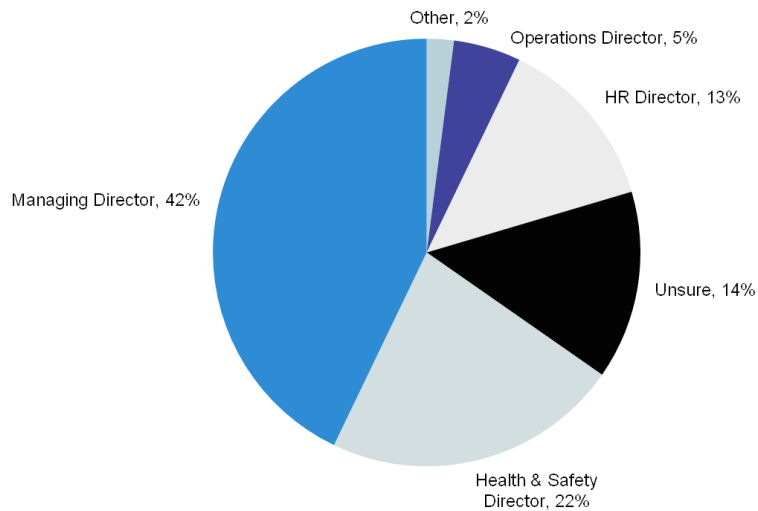
Q. Which of the following sources does your company use to communicate health & safety policies and procedures to staff?



Occupational health support

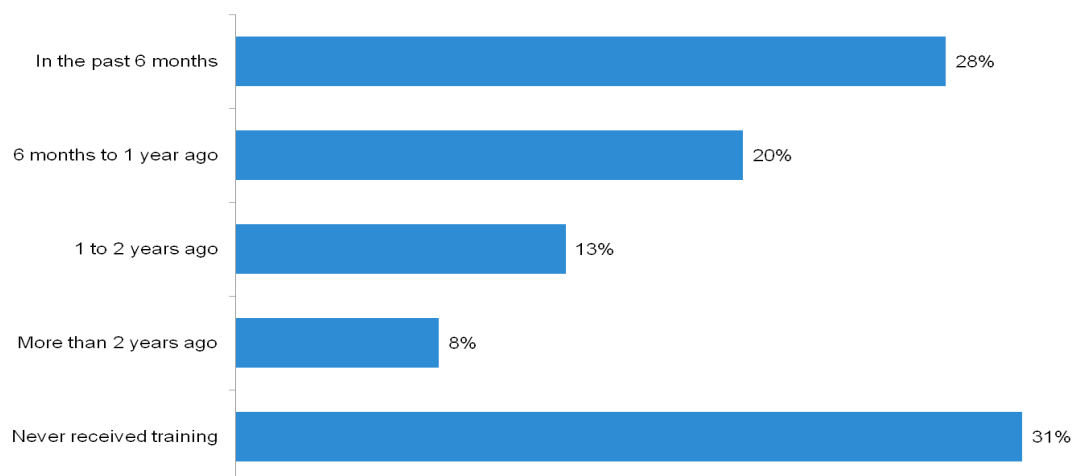
More Occupational Health departments report into Managing Directors than to any other board bodies.

Q. Where does your company's Occupational Health department report to at board level?



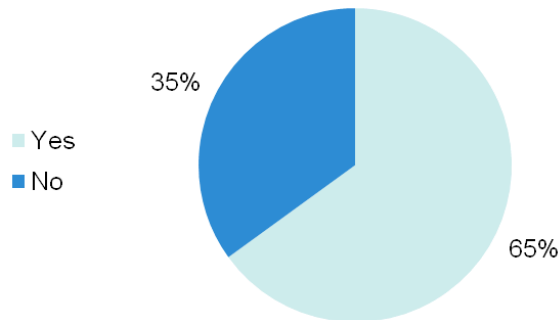
The levels of OH training within construction firms varied with almost half of respondents claiming they had received OH training within the past year. However, three in 10 (31%) claimed to have never received any such training.

Q. When did you last receive training on Occupational Health issues?



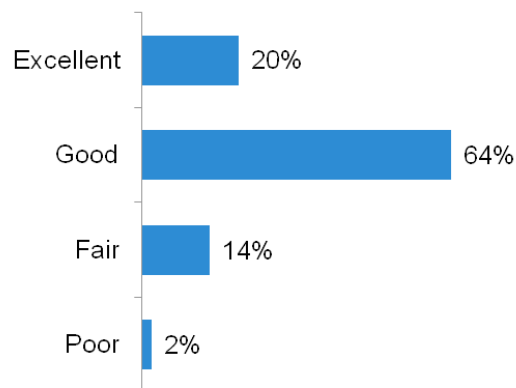
Just under two-thirds of respondents had received Occupational Health advice from their company or work.

Q. Have you ever received Occupational Health advice from your company or at work?



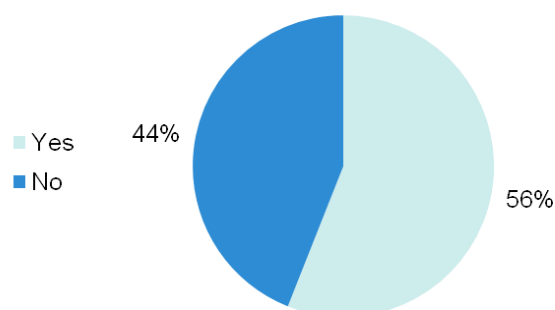
Of those that received Occupational Health advice, 84% rated the advice as either "excellent" or "good."

Q. How would you rate the quality of the advice you received?



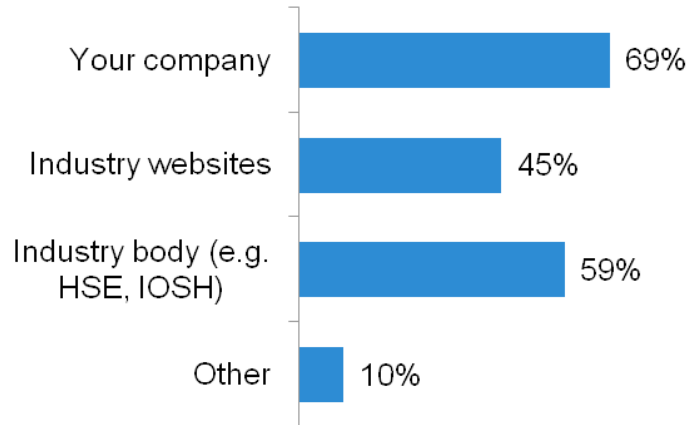
Just over half of respondents claimed to know where to obtain impartial and confidential Occupational Health advice.

Q. Would you know where to obtain impartial and confidential advice regarding Occupational Health?



The majority of respondents would turn to their own company or an industry body to obtain Occupational Health advice.

Q. Where would you obtain this kind of information?



"Other" responses included:

- GP
- External agency
- NHS
- HR company
- Health & safety advisor