

The National Self Build & Renovation Centre **ANNUAL SURVEY - 2025**

In August 2025 we commissioned our **fifth annual survey** of our customers, in partnership with the National Custom & Self Build Association (NaCSBA).

We wanted to understand who are the people undertaking substantial homebuilding projects, what **motivates** them, and what **barriers** they are faced with. We also asked about **funding** and **sustainability**.

We had 508 responses.

WHO ARE OUR VISITORS?

TOP 4 MOTIVATIONS



#1 To attain a home that is more **energy efficient and cheaper to run** (4.8/5)

#2 To achieve **Higher quality** than a standard new build (4.8/5)

#3 A home **built to their exact specifications** (4.7/5)

#4 A more **sustainable and environmentally friendly** home (4.6/5)

TOP 3 OBSTACLES



#1 Planning (3.7/5)

#2 Finding a plot (3.1/5)

#3 Time (2.8/5)

TYPICAL AGE

55-64

- **35%** are in this age bracket.
This has remained consistent for several years.
- **78%** are 55+ and just **10%** are under 45 years old.



Age

EMPLOYMENT STATUS



- Reflecting the age demographic of our audience, **one third (35%) are retired** with a further 9% describing themselves as 'semi-retired'.
- **34% of our audience are working Full Time** - either employed or self-employed, with a further 17% working Part Time - either employed or self-employed.

35%

34%

17%

TYPICAL INCOME



£64,606

The average joint household income is just under **£65K**. Over one third of households (**39%**) earn under **£50K** and almost a quarter (**22%**) earn over **£100K**pa.

This data needs to be read in the context of the age profile (with many retirees not receiving significant income from salaried employment).

TYPE OF PROJECT

PERCEIVED LACK OF QUALITY IN UK HOUSING



Do you believe a self built home is a higher quality building than a home built by a large developer?

Strongly Agree – **77%**

Agree – **20%**

(No one dis-agreed!)

BUILDING A BRAND-NEW HOME



Two-thirds (66.3%) are building a brand-new home (This is the same as 2024)

Of those building a new home, **81.7% are self building** and **5.9% are custom building** (where you buy a prepared plot of land with existing services).

The remaining responses were converting properties into a home or undecided.

PREFERRED METHOD OF CONSTRUCTION

TIMBER REMAINS THE MOST POPULAR CHOICE FOR SELF BUILDERS.

We asked which building system people were choosing to build with. Of those who had decided on their preferred method **Timber Frame** came out as the most popular system once again, with **39%**, followed closely by **prefabricated timber panels** (Structural Insulated Panels) at **22.5%**. Also popular are **traditional masonry** (**18.5%**) and **Insulated Concrete Formwork** (ICF) at **10%**. There was also a strong interest in sustainable materials and attaining 'Passivhaus' standards.

- Timber Frame – **39%**
- Pre-fabricated / Structural Timber Panels (SIPs) – **22.5%**
- Traditional Masonry – **18.5%**
- Insulated Concrete Formwork (ICF) – **10%**
- Others (including Oak, Straw Bale, Steel Frame, Hempcrete) – **10%**
- (Undecided – **21%**)



**Construction
Methods**

WHO IS MANAGING THE PROJECT?



43% - Self-build '**self-managed**' (where you find a plot of land, design your home, and appoint a range of sub-contractors, and you are very hands on during the build)

35% - Self-build '**contractor**' (where you find a plot of land, design your home, & appoint a main contractor to build it and you are mainly hands off during the build)

10% - Self-build '**package / turn-key**' (where you find a plot of land and engage a package company to design and build for you)

DURING THEIR PROJECT



24% EXPECT TO BE **'VERY HANDS ON'** DURING THEIR PROJECT...

...completing all or a large amount of the physical work themselves, with a further 30% looking to take on a 'modest' amount of physical work.

This is an area where individuals can make cost savings during their projects, by providing their own 'free labour'.

FUNDING & FINANCE

BUDGET FOR LAND AND BUILD



The **budget for land and build** shows a wide spread across the range.

Below £250K – 9%

£250 - £350K – 17%

£350 - £500K – 25%

£500K+ - 37%

£1M+ - 12%

The 'sweet spot' in 2023 was between £350K–£500K.
The trend in 2025 is that this has now increased to £500K+.

MOST COMMON SOURCES OF FUNDING



The two most common **sources of funding** a project is from **savings (66%)** and **selling an existing home (50%)**. Often funding comes from a combination of 'pots' with **equity** in existing properties (**16%**) and **inheritance (14%)** two commons sources. **22%** of responses were using a specialist **self-build mortgage** (with staged/ advance drawdowns).

11% were taking a lump sum from their pension pot, with other sources including borrowing from family/friends (**7%**) and sale of a business (**3%**).

RECLAIMING VAT



SELF BUILDERS CAN RECLAIM THE VAT ON BUILDING MATERIALS (AND SOME SERVICES) ON A NEW BUILD OR CONVERSION.

87% intend to make a claim to recoup their VAT.

6% had already made a claim.

7% were not aware of this benefit.

PLOTS & PLANNING

WHERE DID YOU FIND YOUR PLOT?



68% of respondents already own a plot, with a further **9%** having identified a plot (but not yet completed the purchase).

The most common methods of finding a plot were:

1. Estate Agent / Auction - **20%**
2. Rightmove (similar property website) - **19%**
3. Garden Plot or owned land - **18%**
3. My own research in the local area - **12%**

It took **27%** of people **up to one year** to find their plot. **18%** took **one to three years** with **39% already owning** or having inherited the plot/property.

REALISTIC EXPECTATION FOR A PLOT

WE ASKED PEOPLE THEIR REALISTIC EXPECTATION FOR A PLOT

(considering cost, location and affordability).

- **70%** would like to live within, or on the edge of, a **smaller settlement**
- **38%** would like a single plot in the **open countryside**
- **22%** would like to be part of a **larger urban settlement**
- **20%** would like to be part of a **smaller multi plot development (up to 20 homes)** within or on the edge of a larger settlement
- **4%** would like to be part of a plot **within a larger development (over 20 homes)**
- **21%** a **brown field** plot within an existing settlement



**Plot
Expectations**

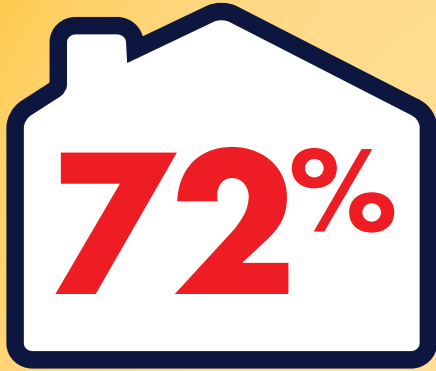
DO YOU HAVE PLANNING PERMISSION?



- **Yes** – Detailed PP – **57%**
- **Yes** – Outline PP – **6%**
- **No** – Submitted but not yet granted – **17%**
- **No** – **20%**

This shows the committed audience the NSBRC attracts – with eight in ten people in the planning process, and over half with full planning approval already granted.

PLANNING ISSUES



HAD EXPERIENCED SPECIFIC **PLANNING ISSUES:**

- Policies not supportive of Self Build – **38%**
- Lack of response / resource – **43%**
- Inflexible officers / poor planning balance – **37%**
- Unwillingness to consider non-standard designs – **23%**
- Bias towards large developments – **23%**
- Not being listened to / not understood – **22%**

We received 74 additional comments, the vast majority very negative towards the experience of planning.

SUSTAINABILITY

SUSTAINABILITY IS VERY IMPORTANT TO SELF-BUILDERS



Sustainability is very important to self-builders, with **92% of people said they'd budgeted for higher levels of insulation.**

TOP EIGHT BUDGETED SUSTAINABLE ITEMS:

1. Higher levels of insulation – **92%**
2. A sustainable heat source (such as an air source or ground source heat pump) – **82%**
3. Micro renewables to generate energy (such as solar PV) – **79%**
4. EV Charging Points – **74%**
5. Airtightness membranes & tapes – **74%**
6. Mechanical ventilation and/or heat recovery system – **74%**
7. Triple glazing – **71%**
8. Battery Storage – **70%**

BIODIVERSITY



WE ASKED ABOUT BIODIVERSITY

Have you given any consideration to whether your plot (when built upon) can contribute to local biodiversity?

58% Yes

19% No

23% Unsure

Comments described the installation of bat/bird boxes, landscaping features, planting trees/shrubs and drainage/water management.

PROJECTS WITH EXISTING PROPERTIES



27% Improving an existing property

17% Extending and improving an existing property

27% Purchasing and substantially renovating and improving an existing property into a modern home

12% Improving an existing property for a better layout

7% are converting a property into a home for the first time

50%

have a budget of **£100K+** with a further **12%** having a budget of **£50K plus**.

72%

of Funding has come from **Savings**. **24%** of projects were largely being funded by the sale of an existing home.



55% had visited the NSBRC **twice or more**.



4.5/5 – NSBRC rating for **Customer Experience**

THANK YOU!

The survey was conducted by email in August 2025, sent to the NSBRC and NaCSBA databases, with a total response of 508 people.