



**UNIVERSITY OF  
CAMBRIDGE**

Department of Engineering

## **CONSTRUCTION ENGINEERING MASTERS DISSERTATION ABSTRACT**

### **The status of job quality in UK construction; An analysis of the sixth European working conditions survey**

Measuring job quality can provide insight into the multidimensional nature that makes a job good. Empirical research on job quality in construction in Europe has indicated that construction has lower working time quality, lower intrinsic job quality and fewer prospects than other sectors. Lower working time quality can affect the health and well-being of workers. Furthermore, these factors contribute to the industry's low career attraction and retention problems which exacerbate the skills shortage in the UK. There is no existing research on job quality in the UK construction sector and its status relative to the EU-15. Research on the status of job quality in UK construction would provide helpful insights and highlight areas previously ignored, not understood, or overlooked and assist with understanding how to unlock 'untapped resources' like women and older workers to mitigate the skills crisis.

This research paper investigates how the UK construction sector performs around job quality compared with 15 EU countries' construction and other sectors and examines the relationship between a high job quality score and the age to which workers believe they can work and the number of women in the construction sector. Empirical analyses are based on the Sixth European Working Conditions Survey collected in 2015 which has not been previously used to analyse UK construction.

The first phase of results identified aspects of UK construction working conditions that are underperforming relative to the sector in a selected group of other EU-15 countries, particularly in relation to working time quality. UK construction sector performance overall is average which is concerning for a country with the second largest GDP in Europe. The second phase of results indicated that construction workers across all EU-15 countries feel that they can do their current job to 60, with younger workers assuming they can work well into their sixties. The result further identified that countries with higher job quality have jobs that are more sustainable into older ages. Phase 3 examined whether there is evidence that countries with a higher job quality in construction have a higher representation of women. The results could only identify small relationships between indices due to the small number of women in sample for construction this result cannot be validated. This is representative of construction, where women are not only scarce compared to men, but also tend to do different jobs within the sector which make it difficult to provide a complete understanding of the levers that could increase the proportion of women in construction. Overall the measurement of job quality has demonstrated that, as a tool, it can offer this sector further insight into how it can adapt and improve conditions for its workforce.

This study recommends a radical rethink of the current 'one size' fits all job design in the construction sector. Further assessment of job quality in UK construction could enable change that shifts the sector from 'average' to being an exemplar.

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