

Global housebuilders' survey 2024

Industry insights, aspirations, challenges and solutions from 669 housebuilders across 17 countries



1 Key findings

Recent industry headwinds have pushed housebuilders to prioritise efficiency and innovation. But what are the challenges driving this need? And what do housebuilders see as the key to success?

The PlanRadar Global Housebuilders' Survey 2024 explores these questions on both business and economic levels. First, review our key findings below for an overview of the critical insights shaping the sector's future.

Expenses are growing.

Close to

80%

reported rising costs, driven by higher material and labour expenses.

Projects get delayed.

Just over

75%

reported labour shortages are having a negative impact on timelines.

Technology is key.

Nearly

65%

agree that technology can bring profits and efficiency to their business.

Ambitions are high.

Over

50%

are seeking new growth opportunities as nearly 75% report steady or increased service demand over the past year.

Workers are needed.

Nearly

50%

cite labour shortages as the top challenge, with over 60% attributing this to a lack of young workers.

More than 50% support revising immigration policies.

Bureaucracy is a barrier.

Nearly

40%

cite uncertainty around government policies as their biggest challenge, with nearly 75% wanting government barriers on housing stock removed.

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Industry overview: the past, present and future of global housebuilding

A snapshot of the industry backdrop

The housebuilding industry stands at a critical juncture facing a complex mix of challenges and opportunities. The Global Housebuilders' Survey 2024 highlights the urgent issues and untapped potential within the sector.

Looking back

Recent years have seen **geopolitical tensions**, disrupted supply chains and material availability, alongside increasing costs for house-builders (and the construction industry at large). **Conflict in Europe** exacerbated pre-existing supply chain disruptions as well as material and energy prices. In the USA meanwhile, **international tariffs impacted** the availability and cost of construction materials. **Rising interest rates** in **Europe**, **US**, and **Australia** increased construction loan costs, impacting budgets and project timelines. Worldwide, **regulatory compliance** with **new ESG regulatory standards** required significant adjustments in operations, while **global labour shortages** led to **delays** and **higher construction costs**.

Reflecting on the present

The industry is currently seeing a <u>cautiously optimistic recovery</u>, with a steady increase in activity as demand holds firm. Nearly 75% of survey respondents reported that demand for their services has either increased or remained unchanged over the past year. However, this resilience in demand is not being matched by the industry's capacity to deliver. Financial constraints, labour shortages and regulatory hurdles continue to strain project timelines and budgets, making it difficult for housebuilders to keep pace

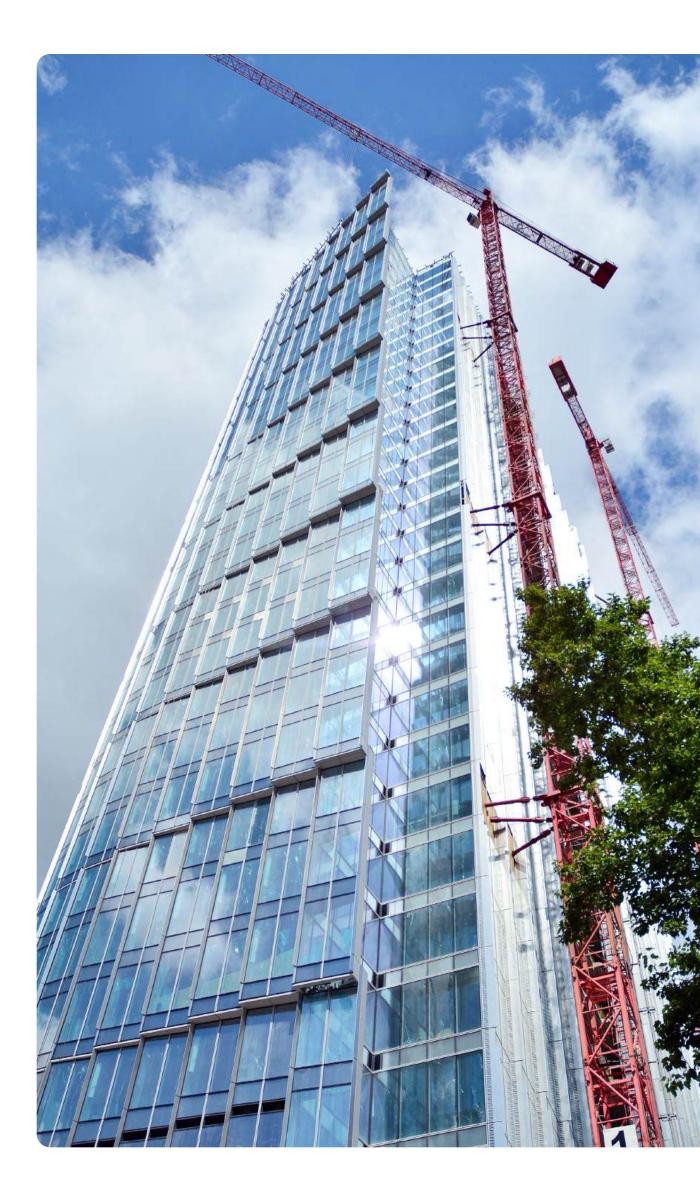
with market needs. This disconnect between demand and the ability to meet it highlights critical issues that must be addressed to sustain growth.

What lies ahead

In 2025, the housebuilding industry will likely face a mix of opportunities and challenges across different regions. For instance, the German housing market <u>is not expected</u> to experience a significant recovery anytime soon due to ongoing structural challenges. In the USA, the housing market <u>may start to recover</u> in 2025, but high mortgage rates are likely to keep sales at subdued levels. And in the UK, significant obstacles are <u>predicted to delay</u> the launch of new construction projects, particularly in the residential sector, as the industry adapts to new safety regulations.

Despite these challenges, the long-term outlook for the construction industry remains promising. <u>Analysts expect</u> the market to grow substantially by 2028, driven by increasing demand, lower interest rates, and supportive government policies. <u>This growth could</u> <u>see</u> the market expand from \$4628.16 billion to \$5802.69 billion during this period, reflecting a strong recovery in the years ahead. Economic conditions, government policies, environmental concerns, and technological advancements will be key drivers.

By understanding the current state of the industry, housebuilders can benchmark themselves, navigate shared challenges, and seize the opportunities ahead. Read on for a more comprehensive introduction to the report, data insights, and detailed recommendations.



How we want this report to help you

We aim to help you pave the next steps towards growth by selecting the right strategy and technology. To do so, we've deep dived into housebuilders' aspirations for their business, the specific hurdles they face in trying to achieve them, and the solutions they believe will help.

We've gathered data from our vast pool of 669 housebuilding professionals across 17 countries worldwide. While we have included economic standpoints for the sake of context, we principally focus on direct feedback from industry professionals and stakeholders. This allows for a more nuanced understanding of current issues, trends, and needs, and enables more targeted and actionable recommendations.

Methodology

About

PlanRadar is a leading platform for digital documentation, communication and reporting in construction, facility management and real estate projects. We have over 150,000 users in more than 75 countries, and over the course of two months, we surveyed a carefully selected segment of housebuilding experts from our high-quality database. As such, the report paints a reliable and accurate picture of the views and experiences of this segment.

We've also included research data from some of the industry's most influential sources to provide you with context and analysis in line with our own survey results, as well as a bigger picture viewpoint.

Responses and regions

Our results share data from **669 housebuilders** spanning **17 countries** worldwide including:

Australia, Austria, Croatia, the Czech Republic,
 France, Germany, Hungary, Italy,
 Poland, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia,
 Slovenia, Spain, Switzerland, the UK
 and the USA.

The survey was made up of 18 questions, and was distributed between May and June of 2024.

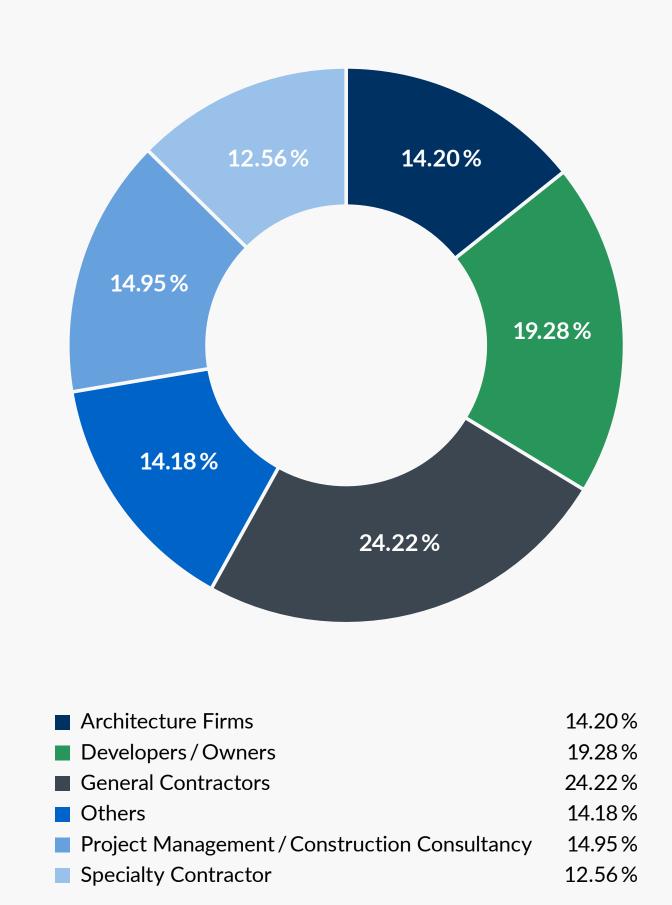
In the USA, we partnered with Salt Lake City Home Builder Association (SLHBA) to derive quality insights from those at the heart of American housebuilding.

Download the complete data here



Sectors

Our insights emerged from a variety of sectors across housebuilding including:



2

Demand and business development



Demand is strong.

Nearly

75%

reported increased or unchanged service demand over the past year.

Ambitions are high.

Over

50%

Are exploring new growth opportunities.

Demand for services over the past year

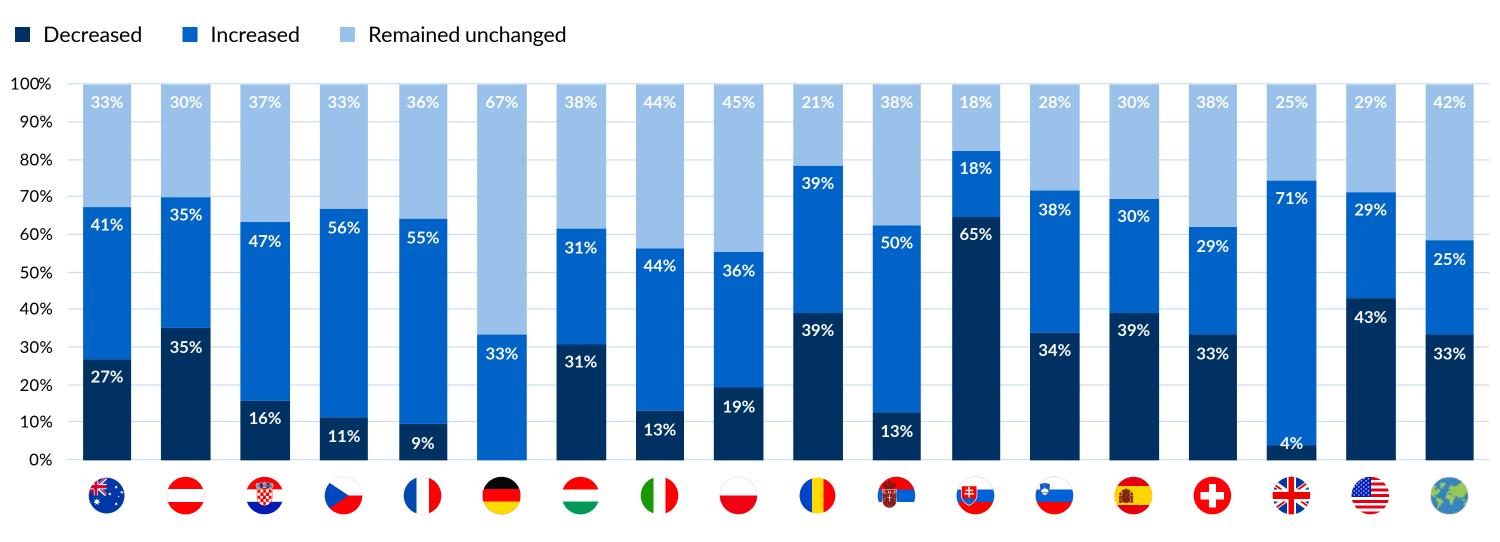
Nearly

75%

reported this had either increased or not changed

This trend aligns with the current cautiously optimistic recovery in the sector. However, despite this robust demand, the industry is facing significant challenges in meeting it. In larger markets, the residential sector is struggling, as evidenced by a <u>17.5 % decline</u> in new residential construction output in the UK and a <u>nearly 27 % drop in building permits</u> in Germany in 2023. These figures highlight a critical disconnect: while demand continues to rise, the industry's capacity to deliver is hampered by severe obstacles, revealing deeper structural issues that require urgent attention.

How has demand for your company's services developed over the past year? It has ...



Future business development

Over

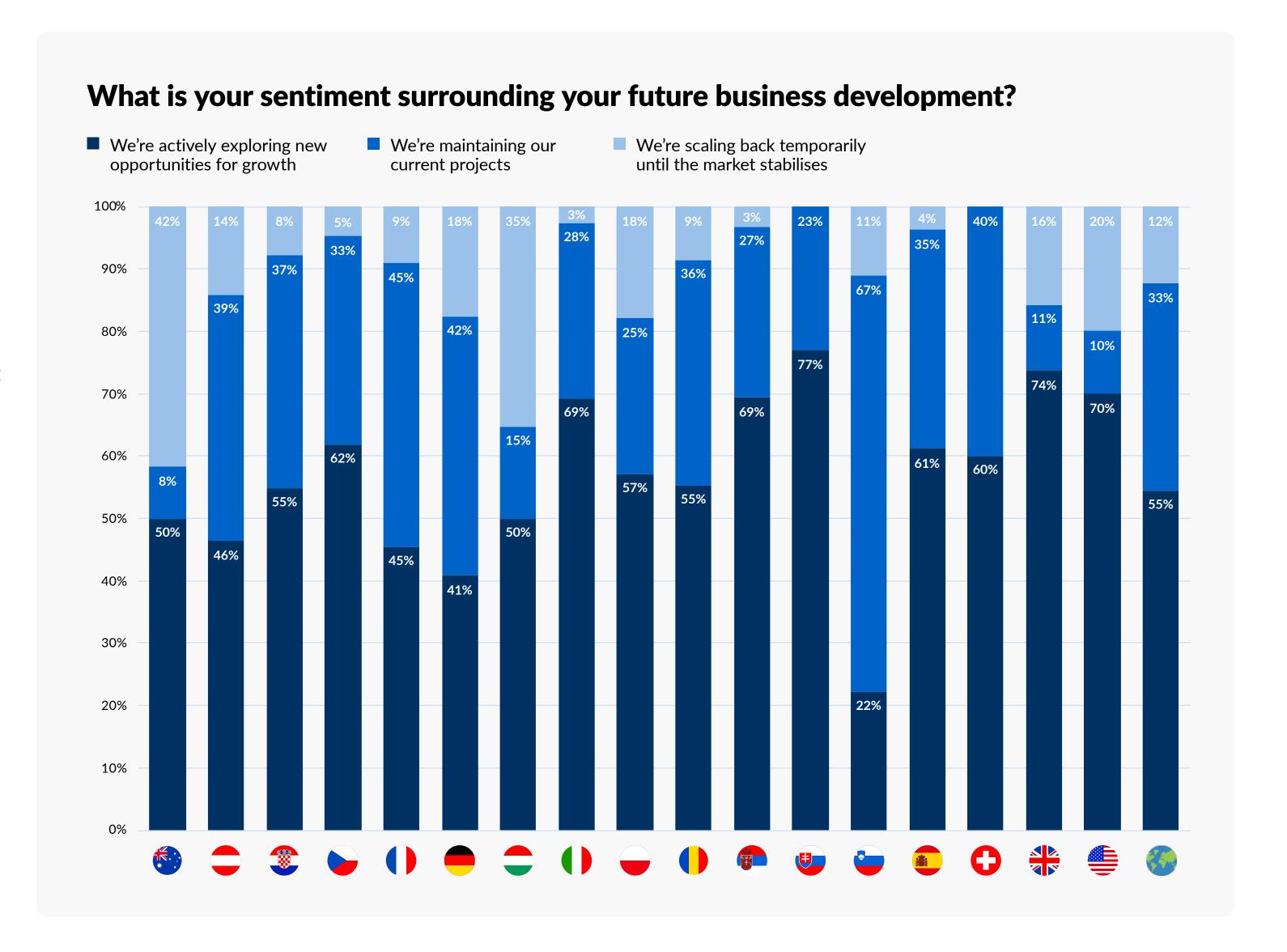
50%

of respondents are exploring new growth opportunities

Almost every country has more than half of its respondents actively exploring new opportunities. This broad engagement signifies a strong push for innovation and growth in the sector despite (or even because of) the steep challenges they face.

On the flip side, only about 12% of housebuilders are temporarily scaling back their activities until the market stabilises. While Australia leads in this trend with over 40% of respondents scaling back, and Hungary follows with just over a third, the overall trend is one of planned growth with a modest scale of pullbacks.

The rise in positive sentiment aligns with predictions of growth in the coming years as outlined in our overview. While slow economic growth may **make the immediate future challenging** for real estate markets, lower interest rates could help offset this, boosting growth and revitalising capital markets.



The three key business challenges

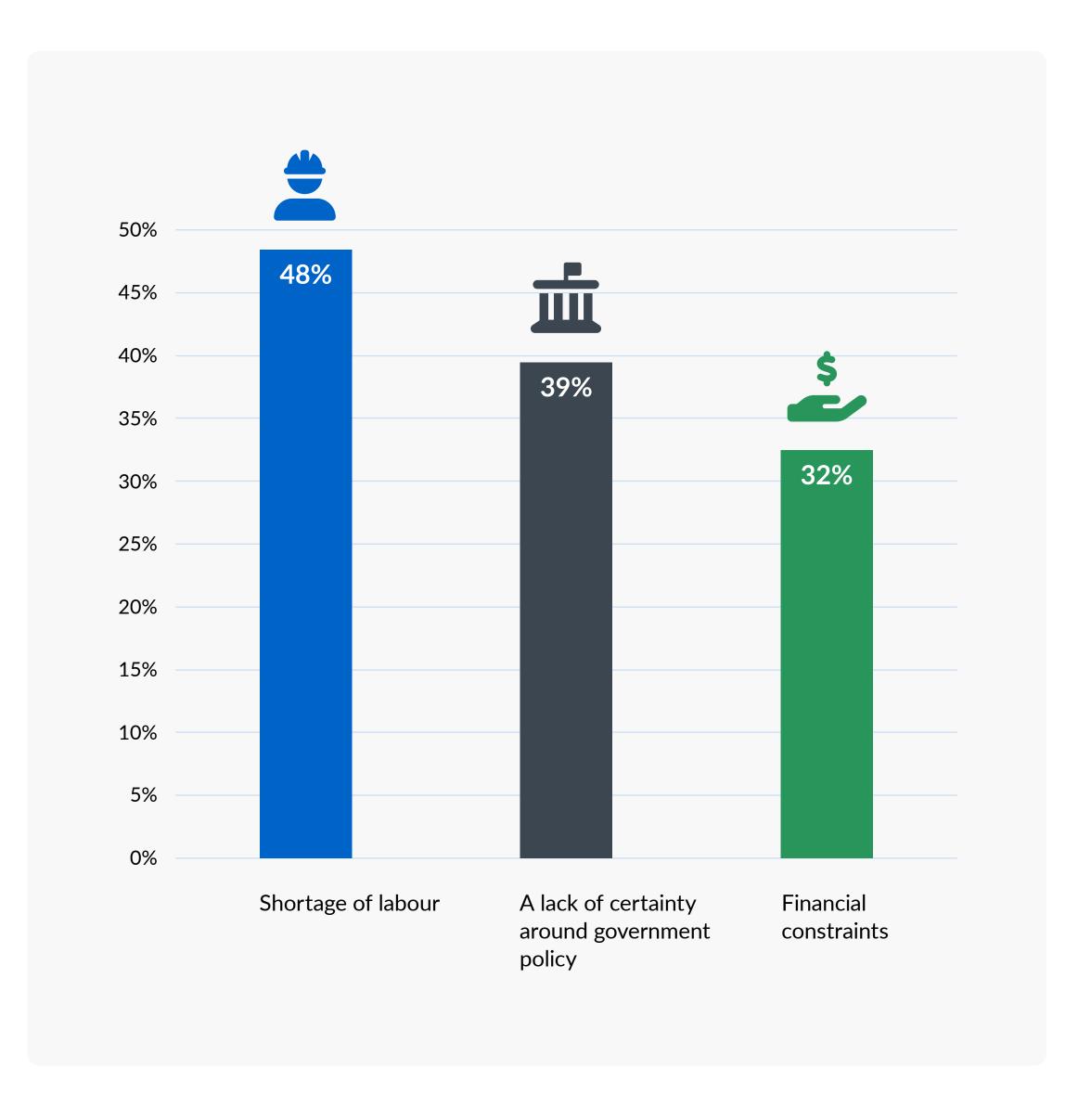
We asked respondents to pinpoint a few of their top challenges, and the results paint a clear picture of what's holding the industry back.

- Shortage of labour
 Labour shortages er
 - Labour shortages emerged as the most critical issue, with nearly 50% of housebuilders naming it as their biggest headache.
- A lack of certainty around government policy
 The unpredictable nature of government policies followed in second place as an obstacle for nearly 40% of firms.
- Financial constraints

 Financial constraints is the third topmost challenge as cited by nearly 1/3.

These problems are far from standalone; they are interconnected, creating a domino effect that intensifies their impact on the industry.

The upcoming chapters will tackle these three major obstacles head-on, offering a deep dive into each issue. We'll also provide targeted recommendations and solutions, addressing these critical challenges with actionable insights and practical strategies.



Global housebuilders' survey 2024

4 Labour shortages

Key findingsWhat the data reveals

Shortages are affecting timelines.

Exactly

75%

say labour shortages have **negatively impacted project timelines**.

Shortages are affecting wages.

Nearly

2/3

say these shortages have caused a moderate or significant wage rise.

The biggest challenge

Nearly

50%

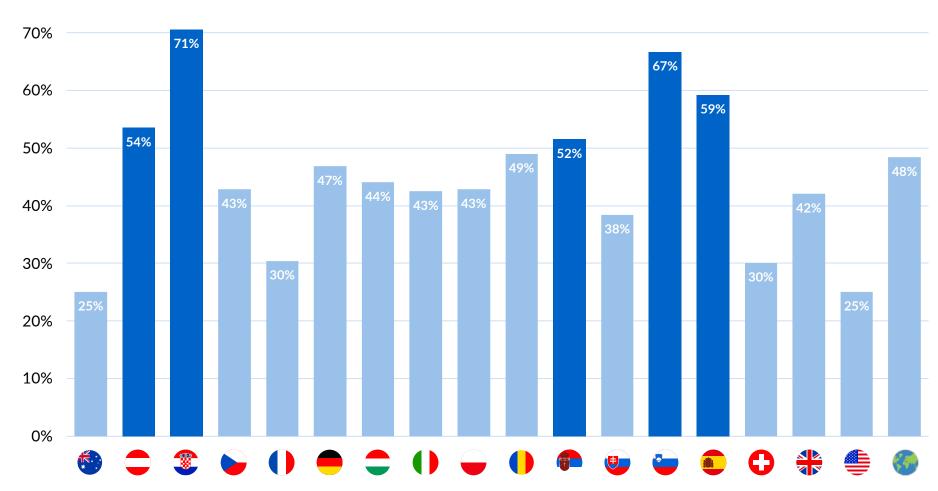
cite labour shortages as their greatest hurdle

Labour shortages are at the top of the list of our respondents' most pressing obstacles.

There are five countries where labour shortages were the biggest hurdle, and in all of these countries, over 50% of respondents declared it as their greatest issue.

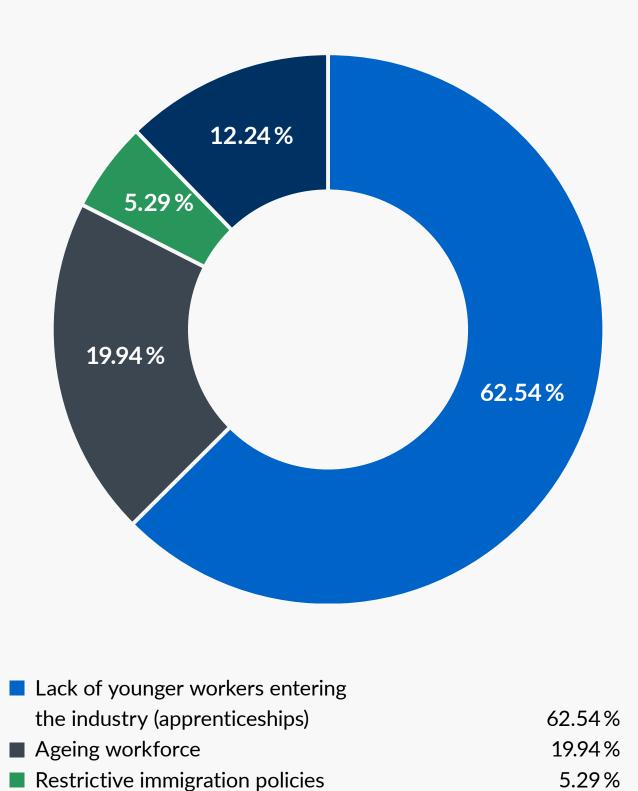
Croatia stands out as the largest complainant of labour shortages at just over 70%, followed by Slovenia, Spain, Austria and Serbia.

Shortage of labour is the biggest challenge:



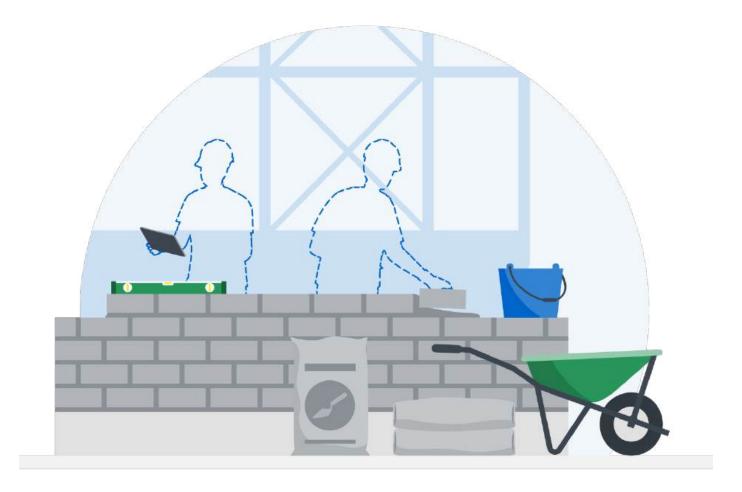


What is the primary cause of a lack of suitably skilled workers in the industry?



12.24%

Other



The threat to the housebuilding workforce is revealed as a demographic crisis. It's clear that the sector is struggling to attract the next generation while the previous generation ages out of the industry. Meanwhile, only around 5% of all respondents state that the issue is restrictive immigration policies, suggesting challenges such as declining interest in trade careers, insufficient training and recruitment strategies, and the need for better incentives within the industry.

Just over 3/3 of respondents globally identify the lack of young workers entering the industry as the biggest reason behind the lack of suitably skilled workers available. This increases to 80% in Poland, with Austria, Slovenia, Spain and Serbia not far behind.

In second place, nearly 20% of respondents cite an ageing workforce as their biggest issue. The USA stands at the top with half of respondents stating as such, while Slovakia has well over a third of respondents expressing this. Both the UK and Switzerland follow not far behind at around the 1/3 mark with the rest of the countries falling below this.

This shortage is a critical issue that affects the overall productivity and efficiency of the sector. The lack of sufficiently skilled workers hampers the ability of companies to meet project timelines and maintain quality standards, creating a ripple effect that impacts the entire construction process.

The effect on project timelines

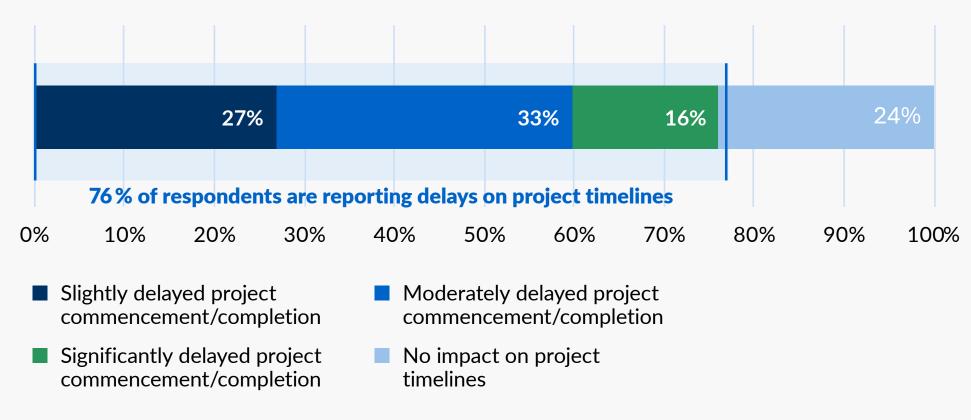
report negative

The ripple effect of labour shortages is unmistakable in the responses about their impact on project timelines. Across the board, every country reported at least 50% of respondents experiencing negative effects, underscoring the widespread nature of this issue.

The impact on project effectiveness and efficiency reveals the urgent and pressing need to address underlying issues and improve labour market conditions.

Australia leads with 100% of respondents reporting delays, while the USA, Slovakia, and France follow closely behind with nearly 90% of all their respondents facing similar disruptions.

How has the current shortage of labour impacted on your ability to meet project timelines?



The effects of these timeline impacts can mean strained client relationships and potentially even lead to financial penalties for the business. In the residential housing sector overall, they can disrupt the housing supply chain, affecting future projects and dragging down overall industry productivity.

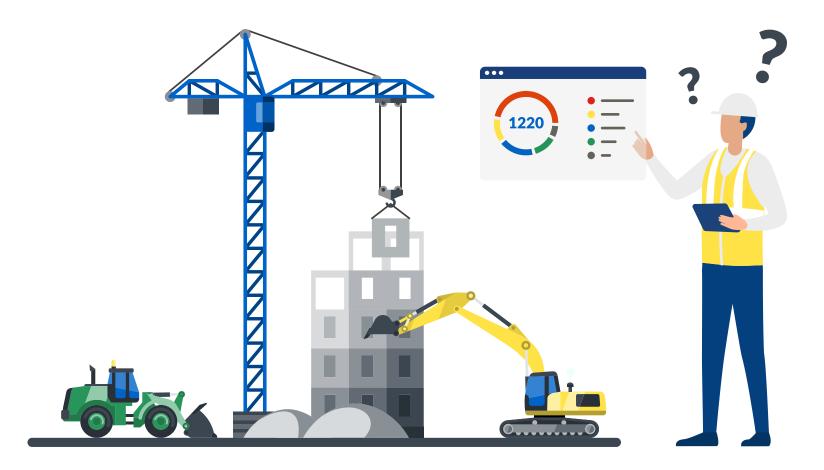
Are the industry's digital skills up to par?

In the context of labour shortages, digital becomes a crucial enabler that not only bridges the gap left by fewer skilled workers but also accelerates productivity, streamlines processes, and attracts a new generation of tech-savvy professionals.

According to our report on digitalisation in the construction and real estate sector, a striking 97% of professionals anticipate increased investment in digital tools within the next three years.

However, 1 in 10 construction workers in the EU currently face a significant digital skills gap.

Failing to close this skills gap is not just a missed opportunity, it's a critical risk to the industry's future. To truly capitalise on the potential of digital advancements and tackle persistent labour shortages and the resulting project delays, the construction sector must prioritise upskilling its workforce. Without this essential shift, investments in technology will remain underutilised, and the promised benefits of greater efficiency and productivity will remain out of reach.



The impact on salaries

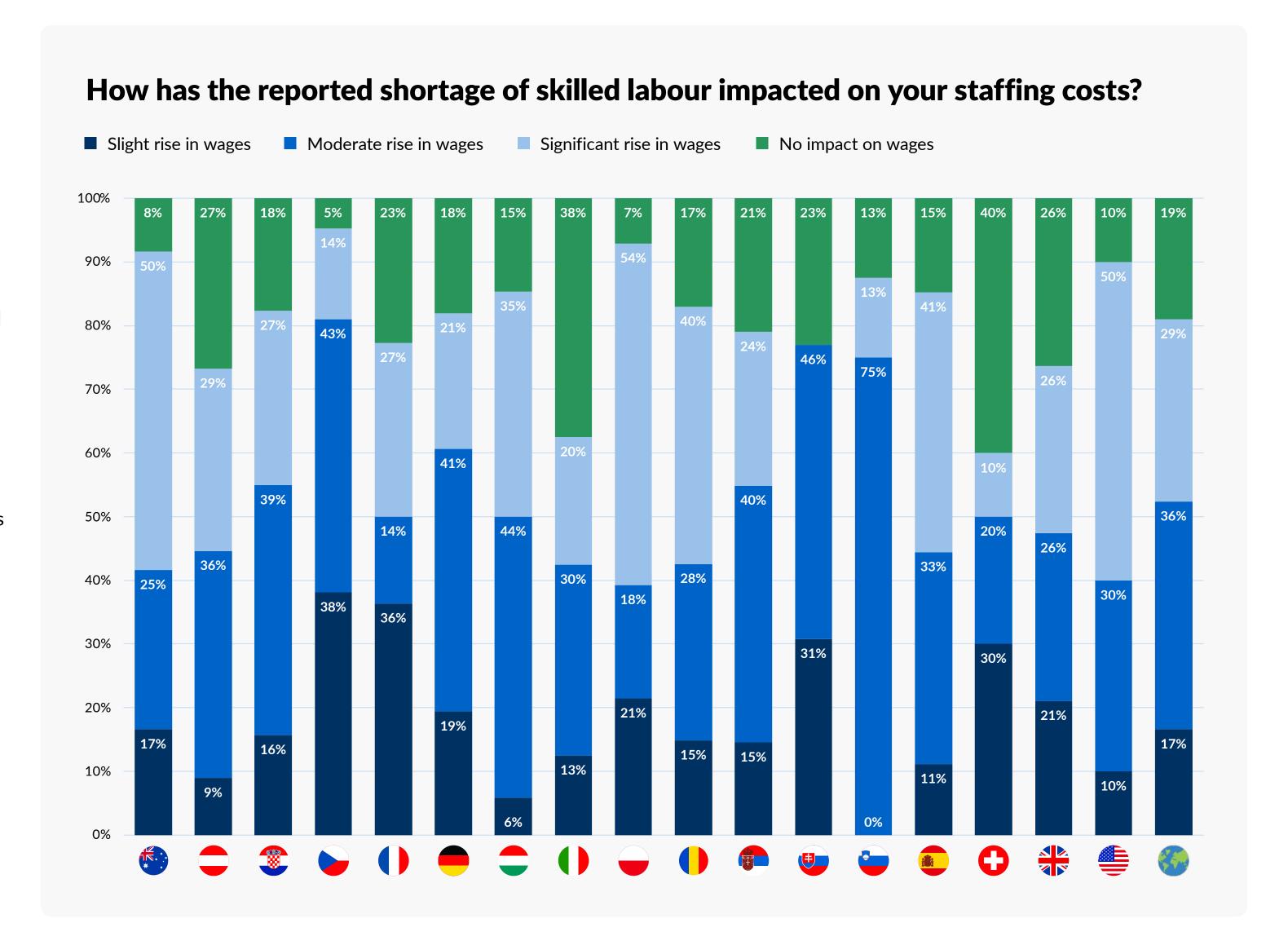
Nearly

have experienced a "moderate" or "significant" wage rise due to labour shortages

In most regions, the majority of companies are feeling the pressure of rising wages. When combining the responses of "moderate" and "significant" wage increases, we found only three countries have less than 50% of respondents stating this impact on staff earnings, and within six countries this rises to 70% of respondents. The broad impact of wage inflation is palpable across many regions. The limited supply of qualified workers has likely created intense competition among employers to attract and retain talent. Those who are available can demand greater salaries, driving up costs across the board.

The increase in staffing costs adds another layer to the strain of a limited pool of qualified workers. Economy-wise, this conforms to global reports. In the USA for example, the construction industry currently requires approximately 723,000 new construction workers each year to meet demand - residential construction represents 3.2 million of the construction payroll employment of 7.9 million. In the UK, the labour government pledges to build 1.5 million homes in England over the next five years but faces a shortfall of more than 150,000 skilled construction workers.

There's a global talent pool just waiting to be tapped into. Easier routes to sourcing skilled workers from abroad can help the housebuilding industry remain competitive and capable of meeting growing demand. Streamlining immigration processes, reducing administrative barriers, and creating targeted programs for skilled construction professionals can significantly alleviate workforce constraints.



Lack of certainty around government policy



Bureaucracy is a barrier.

Nearly

want government barriers on housing stock removed.

International skilled labour is in demand.

Over

50%

Say immigration policies should be revised.

The road to affordable housing construction.

Nearly

want more government tax breaks and subsidies.

The second biggest challenge

Nearly

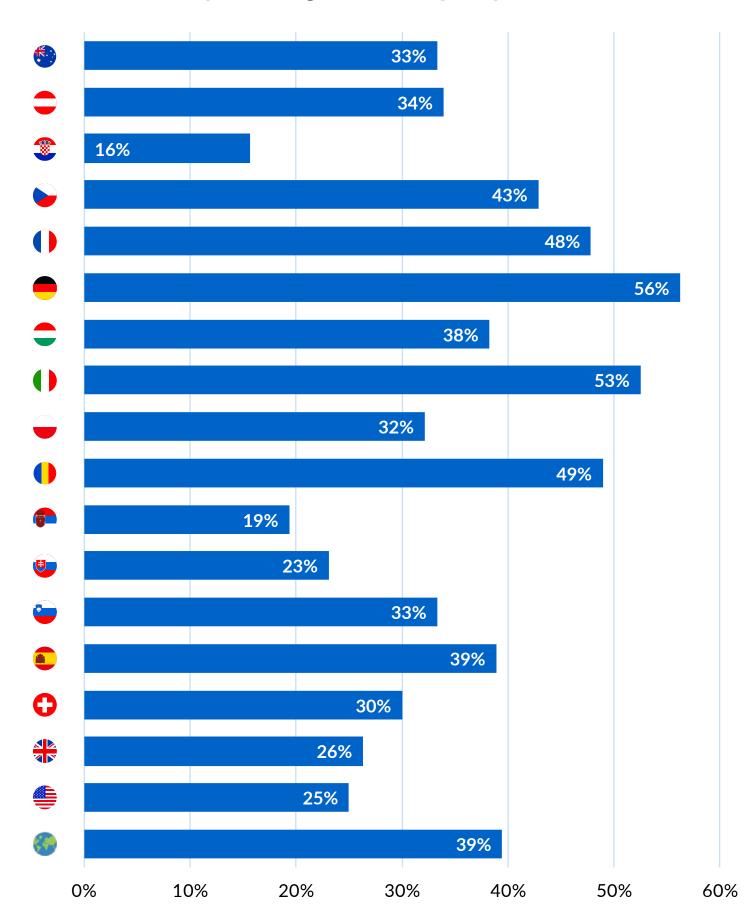
identify regulatory unpredictability as a primary concern

Though labour shortages top the list of challenges in our survey, uncertainty around government policies is a close second.

In many countries, this issue is as significant an issue as labour shortages, demonstrating that these challenges are closely linked. It often sits as the top challenge alongside other big worries like financial issues and a lack of projects at the same percentage, making it a crucial factor that's hard to ignore. The fact that it's always a major concern - never ranking the least important for a single country - underscores just how widespread and serious this issue is across housebuilding.

When policies change frequently or lack clarity, companies may hesitate to embark on new projects, fearing that complex, unforeseen regulations could disrupt their operations or increase costs.

Lack of certainty around government policy:



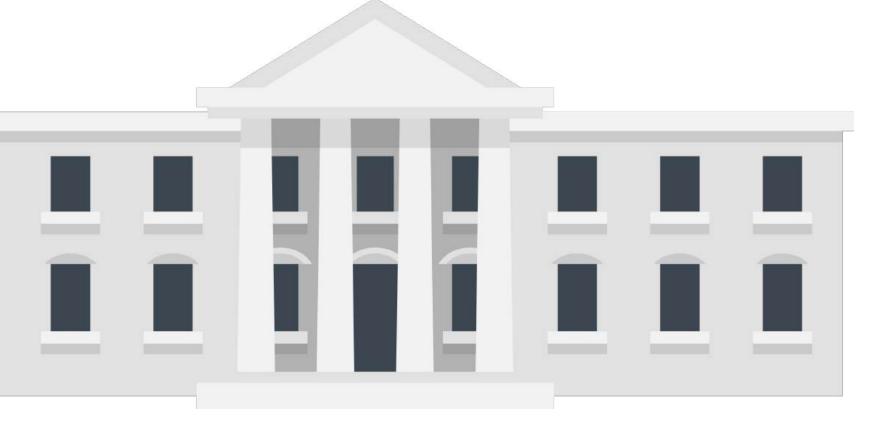
Regulatory barriers on housing stock:

Nearly

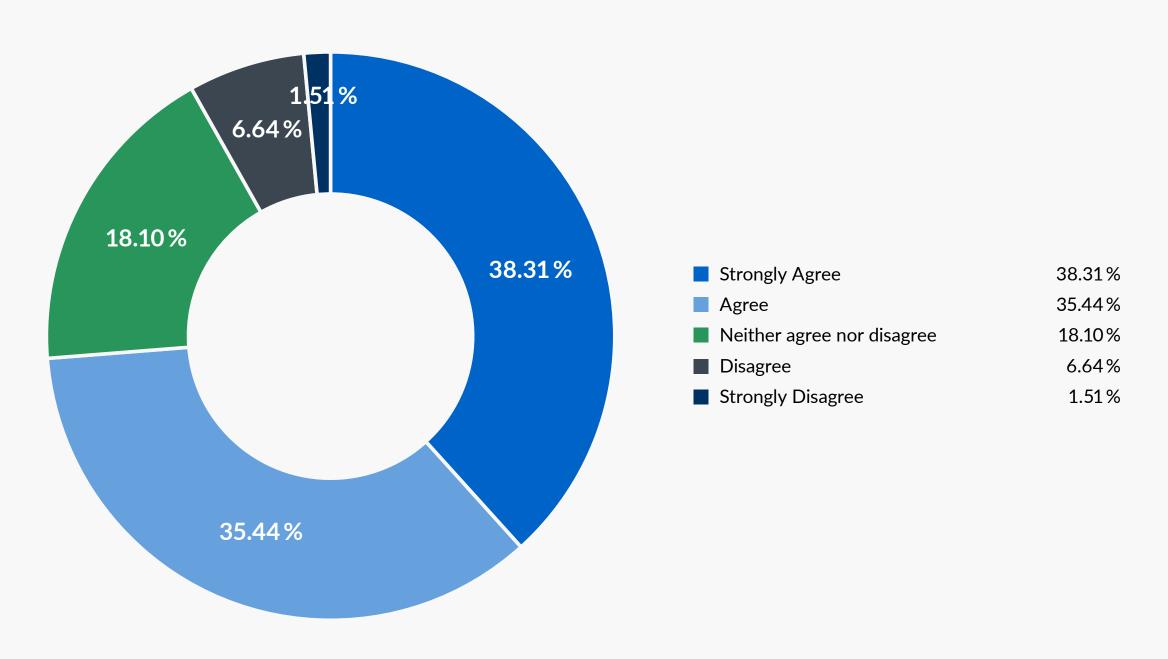
want governments to reduce these

Most countries are on board with reducing regulatory barriers for housing, Germany is a standout with over 93% of people agreeing that reducing barriers is a good idea. The Czech Republic, the USA, Austria, and Australia also have strong support, with over 80% in favor, and all countries besides Serbia having over 50% of respondents in favour, suggesting a widespread and deep impact of tighter regulatory holds around the world.

But the UK is the outlier. Despite nearly 60% in favour of less regulatory restrictions, it tops the list of people disagreeing or strongly disagreeing at more than 25%. The country may have a notable concern about how deregulation might affect housing quality or affordability, which could be attributed to the specific issues in its housing market or regulatory system around safety.



The government must reduce regulatory barriers to allow for an increase in housing stock.



Regulatory hurdles, such as restrictive zoning laws and lengthy approval processes, can significantly delay construction projects and limit the availability of housing. More flexible policies can facilitate the development of higher-density housing and address the growing demand for residential properties.

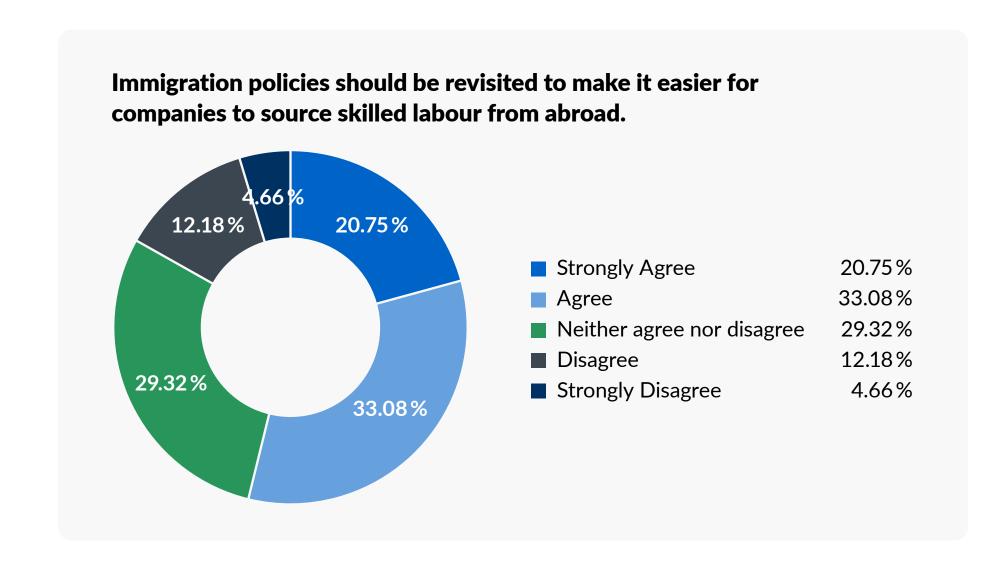
In Spain, for instance, 25,000 homes are **ready to be built** in the Canary Islands and are being held back by the local government due to delays in the complex bureaucratic process.

Immigration policies

Over

of respondents agree or strongly agree that such policies should be revised to source skilled labour from abroad

Immigration policies hold significant potential in alleviating the persistent labour shortages plaguing housebuilders. Particularly because the main cause is a demographic crisis with over % of respondents citing the lack of young workers entering the industry as their biggest issue while 20% declare an ageing workforce as the biggest cause of their staffing shortfall. In countries where these issues are particularly acute, the potential for immigration reform to lessen the resulting burden is substantial. And yet, just under 1/5 of respondents overall still disagree that such policies should be revised, with Hungary, Slovenia, France and Switzerland being the topmost objectors. This curiously highlights varying national perspectives, potentially influenced by differing economic needs, political climates, and societal attitudes towards immigration and labour markets.





Tax break and subsidies

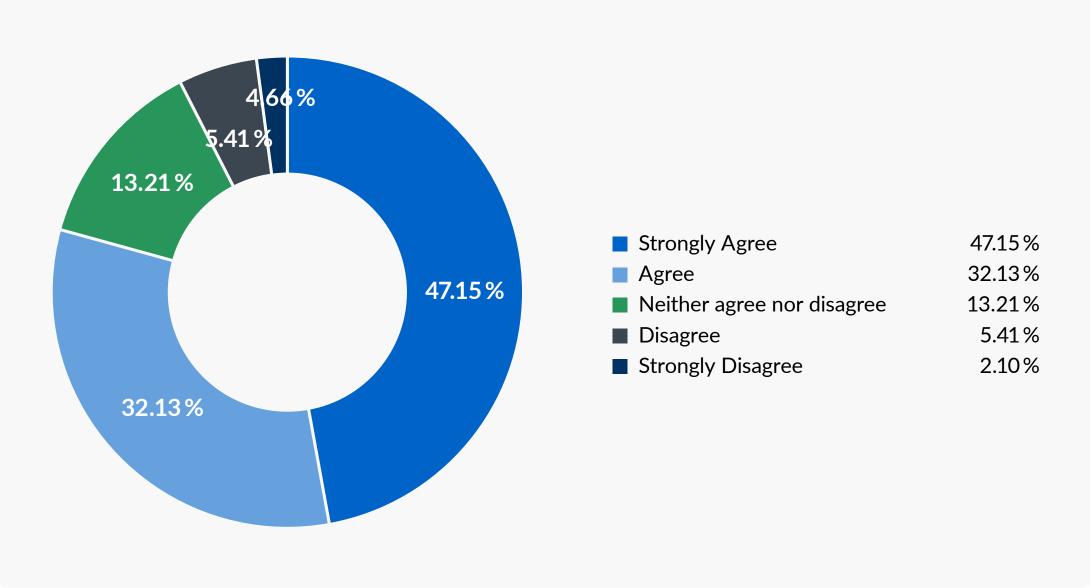
Nearly

believe these would encourage more affordable housing construction

The strong support for these measures is overwhelming and undeniable. This near-universal backing across housebuilders underscores the urgent need for action and the transformative potential of such financial strategies in making affordable housing a reality. These respondents likely believe that such incentives can help offset the high construction-associated costs making it feasible for developers to invest in affordable housing projects.



The government should offer financial incentives such as tax breaks and subsidies to encourage the construction of more affordable housing.





Interestingly, however, is that although most countries are highly supportive of introducing such measures, there were still some in disagreement. In particular, the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Poland fell into the camp of over 20% of respondents disagreeing or strongly disagreeing. This dissent may stem from varying economic philosophies, specific local housing market conditions, political or social factors, or a lack of trust in the effectiveness of such policies.

Financial constraints

Key findings - What the data reveals

Materials are the greatest cost constraint.

Over

70%

are contending with growing costs of materials.

The lack of labour is driving up costs.

Nearly

face a moderate or significant rise in staffing costs.

The third biggest challenge

Nearly

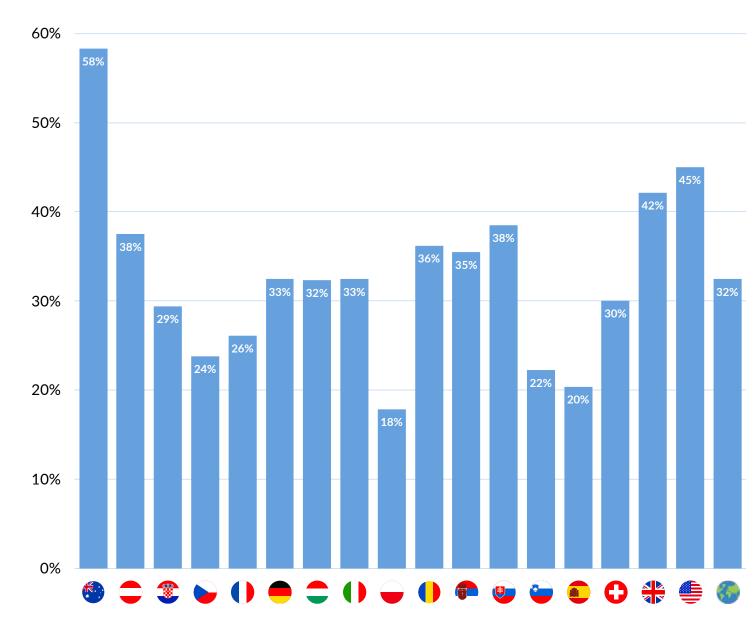
claim financial constraints are a key issue

This being in our top three issues for housebuilders reveals a significant underlying problem that extends beyond operational inefficiencies; it touches on the very financial health and sustainability of the industry itself.

In particular, Australia's situation is alarming, with over 50% of respondents citing financial constraints as their primary challenge. This figure starkly contrasts with the situation in other regions, where financial issues, while still significant, are less pronounced. The high percentage in Australia signals an acute financial strain that may be exacerbated by local economic conditions, regulatory environments, or market dynamics that are not as prevalent elsewhere.

It's followed by notable percentages from the USA and the UK, indicating that while the severity may vary, the problem is far from isolated. In these countries, financial pressures are compounding the difficulties posed by labour shortages, rising material costs, and regulatory challenges.

Financial constraints as a key challenge



Increased material costs

Over

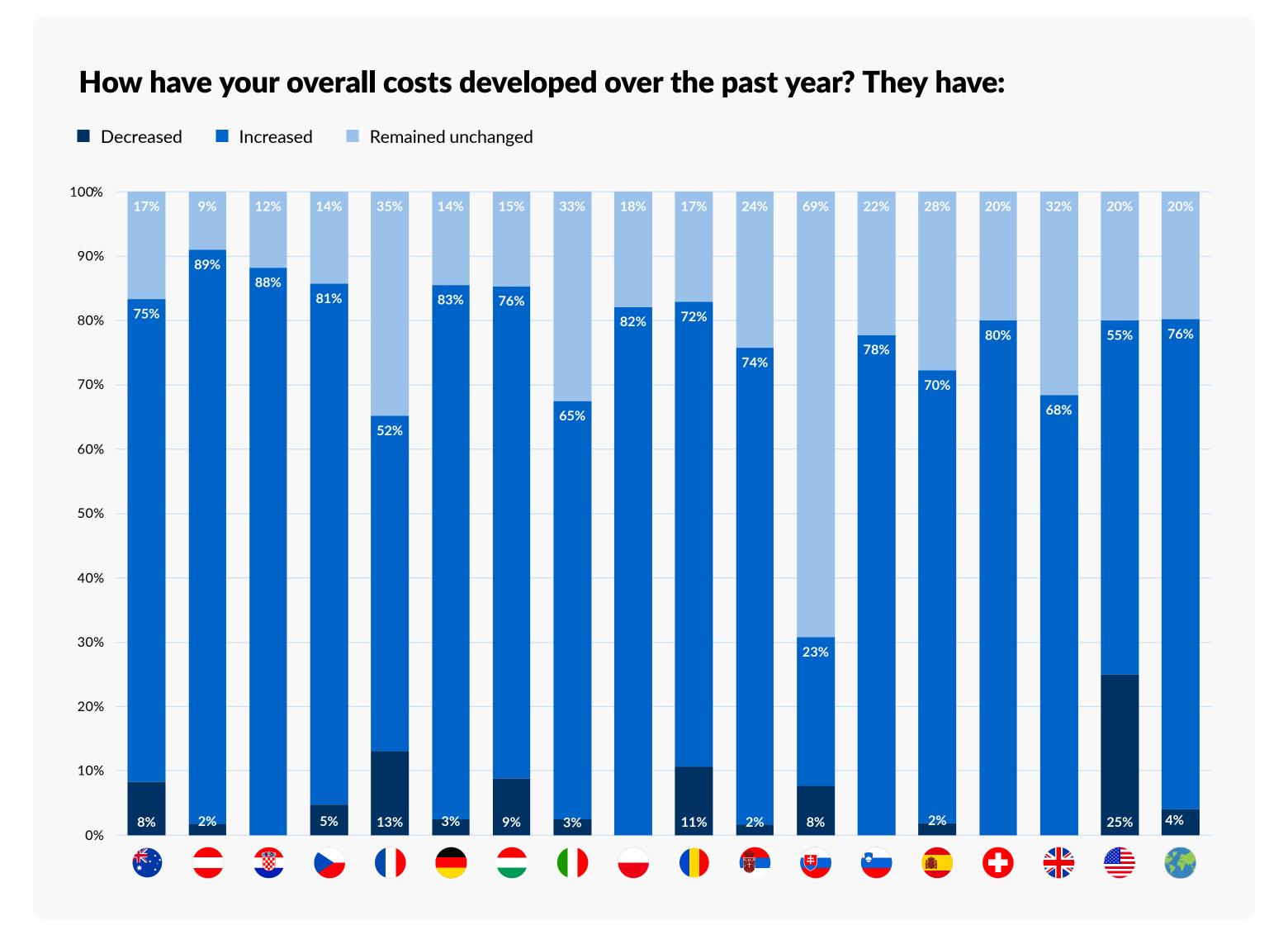
say this is a major difficulty

As we examine the reasons behind financial constraints, which nearly one-third of respondents cited as a key challenge, it's evident that rising material costs are a significant factor. In most countries, over 70% of respondents cited rising costs as their biggest challenge with construction materials. This compares to other potential issues such as delivery delays, difficulties sourcing sustainable materials, quality concerns, and shortages, being cited by fewer than 15% of respondents.

The difficulty of rising costs in construction materials is particularly acute in Slovenia, where 100% of respondents reported it as their primary issue. Additionally, in nine other countries - Spain, the UK, Poland, France, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Austria, and Croatia between 70% and 90% of respondents indicated that material costs are a major challenge. Even in countries with lower percentages, like the USA and Switzerland, nearly 45% of respondents still consider material costs to be a significant problem.

These findings indicate that economic pressures may force companies to prioritise cost management over logistics or quality to remain competitive.

Research from within the USA, for example, did find that the factors fuelling material cost rises include supply and demand, inflation, global factors that cause supply chain disruptions (geopolitical tensions, trade disputes, and changes in international trade policies), and even sustainability initiatives. This is in line with our assertion that the industry cannot meet demand. As such, the increasing costs of materials is one of the critical issues that must be addressed to sustain growth.



7 The case for technological investment



Tech is a known benefit.

Nearly

2/3

believe that tech investments can help with profits.

Onboarding is a challenge.

Over

75%

find introducing new tech difficult.

Traditional views are holding back progress.

Close to

50%

Say that overly traditional views are the greatest challenge.

Nearly

are convinced of the advantage of increased investments in technological solutions

Specifically, just over 3/4 agree or strongly agree that such investments can enhance profitability through improved efficiency.



An increased investment in technological solutions (e.g. construction management software, BIM, etc.) would help companies to become more profitable through increased efficiency.

What's holding companies back from technology adoption?



The gap between recognition and action

And yet, when we refer back to our digitalisation report of 2023 there's a notable gap between awareness and implementation. More than a quarter of industry professionals reported no investment in construction management software over the past three years.

This reluctance to invest, even amidst rising costs and impact on project timelines, is a significant barrier to realising the full potential of technological advancements.



Difficulty in introducing new technologies

A substantial 76% of respondents to the previous digitalisation survey report difficulties in introducing new technologies within their teams or companies.

These challenges can stem from various factors, including resistance to change, lack of training, and insufficient support from leadership. The difficulties in technology adoption underscore the need for a more structured and supportive approach to digital advancement in the industry.



Lack of investment in digital profiles

The 2023 digitalisation survey also revealed that nearly 70% of industry professionals have not increased recruitment of digital profiles in the last three years.

This lack of investment in digital talent hinders the ability to effectively implement and leverage new technologies. Without the necessary expertise, companies struggle to integrate digital tools into their workflows, limiting their potential benefits.



Main blockers to technological adoption

The primary obstacles slowing down the adoption of new technologies are traditional views held by stakeholders and the perception of low return on investment (ROI).

According to the survey, 53% of respondents cited "overly traditional views of stakeholders" as the most significant blocker, while 33% mentioned the "perception of low ROI." These attitudes can create a conservative mindset that resists change, even when evidence suggests that technology can lead to substantial long-term gains.

How PlanRadar can help housebuilders turn challenges into opportunities

In today's housebuilding industry, labour shortages, cost constraints, and unpredictable regulations aren't just challenges - they're potential barriers to success. But PlanRadar empowers you to overcome them.

Stay efficient when skilled workers are scarce



of customers say PlanRadar increases productivity*

Shortages of skilled labour are pervasive across the housebuilding sector despite surging demand. But you can keep things running smoothly by using PlanRadar to enhance project efficiency.

Our platform simplifies your everyday processes to speed them up – from capturing information on-site more quickly, to cutting down the time it takes to create reports - you can keep your workloads high, even during a labour shortage.

Stay on top of complex and shifting regulatory requirements



of customers say PlanRadar reduces time spent compiling reports*

Navigating constantly changing regulations can be timeconsuming, but PlanRadar simplifies the process while ensuring accuracy. Our platform allows you to collect, store, and organize all compliance data in one central location, making sure every inspection, site audit, and regulatory update is captured and ready for reporting.

With just a few clicks, you can generate final reports, backed by a secure, centralized audit trail that keeps you audit-ready at all times. By eliminating paperwork and streamlining reporting, PlanRadar helps you stay compliant while freeing up time to focus on growing your business.

Ease the burden of mounting financial hurdles



of customers say PlanRadar reduces the amount of rework on projects*

Rework and overall project inefficiencies are leading causes of mounting project costs. At a time when housebuilders are caught in the grip of cost constraints, these issues need direct attention.

With stakeholders communicating on a single platform and accessing the most up-to-date project information, you're reducing the risk of miscommunication that often leads to rework. This saves you both the money and time that you can better spend on delivering on quality projects and enhancing your bottom line.

^{*}PlanRadar Annual Customer Survey



PlanRadar is a leading digital documentation, communication and reporting platform for the housebuilding industry, designed to give housebuilders a competitive edge. That's exactly why our users have reported saving seven hours a week, and why over 150,000 users across 75 + countries are eliminating paperwork with PlanRadar.





At CBRE, we are always on the lookout for new digital tools that add value to our customers and make our work easier for our employees. With PlanRadar we have found a product that meets both requirements – and a team that knows the market, listens and constantly evolves the product."













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