



 Part of the Masonite Group

FIRE SAFETY & COMPLIANCE IN THE PUBLIC SECTOR 2022

Survey Report

In association with





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INTRODUCTION

In 2017, the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (formerly the Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government) ushered in the Building Safety Programme to bolster the health and safety of residents in high-rise buildings - 'now, and in the future'.

The programme - which took immediate steps to prohibit the use of combustibles materials in the external walls of high-rise residential buildings over a certain height - was prompted by a series of high-profile incidents, most notably the tragic Grenfell Tower fire of June 2017.

Now, five years on from the programme's formation, Door-Stop International is eager to understand the extent to which the public sector's approach to fire safety has evolved.

Are housing associations and local authorities taking fire safety and compliance as seriously as they should be? What are the biggest barriers for organisations looking to safeguard resident wellbeing in high-rise buildings, and has changing legislation helped or hindered their collective efforts?

With these core questions in mind, we've partnered with Surveys in Public Sector to identify awareness for the programme, its implications and fire safety and compliance more broadly - with a view to making a meaningful difference in the health, safety and wellbeing of residents nationwide.

ABOUT DOOR-STOP INTERNATIONAL

Door-Stop International, part of the Masonite Group of companies, creates total fire doorset systems that are designed to delay the spread of fire and smoke.

The Masonite Group is a global manufacturer of doors with a long commitment to fire door safety.

Since 1925, Masonite has provided its customers with innovative products and superior service. As an international organisation, the company received the Underwriters Laboratories' Dedication to Safety award which recognises commitment to safety testing and innovation.

In the UK, Masonite holds a long heritage of demonstrated commitment to fire door

certification – having established relationships with the British Woodworking Federation (BWF) – and being key players in supporting the introduction of the BWF Certifire certification scheme.

For more, visit:

www.masonite.co.uk/firedoorsets



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SURVEY METHODOLOGY

The survey was conducted by Surveys in Public Sector in partnership with Door-Stop International. The project ran from Tuesday 19th October 2021 to Friday 3rd December 2021.

A total of 99 individuals participated in the survey, representing job roles across the public sector. These included:

- Asset Manager
- Building Safety Manager
- Chief Executive
- Compliance Manager
- Environmental Health Officer
- Facilities Manager
- Fire Safety Officer
- Head of Housing
- Health & Safety Coordinator
- Managing Director
- Property Services Manager
- Senior Building Control Surveyor

*** Each participant received a complimentary copy of the key findings report, and there was no inducement to take part in our research project.**

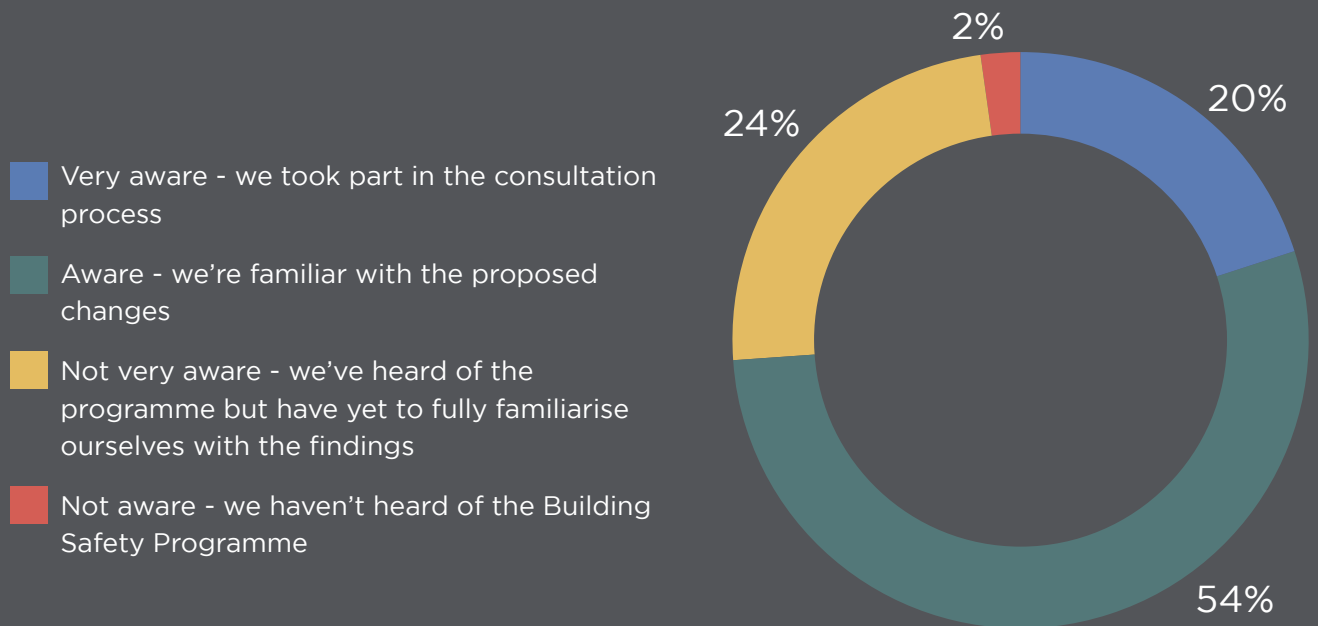
KEY FINDINGS

Fire safety and compliance is high on the agenda

With a remit to ensure high-rise buildings are safer for residents and stakeholders alike, the Building Safety Programme seemed a natural starting point for our research.

Firstly, we wanted to understand public sector awareness of the programme and the proposed building reforms.

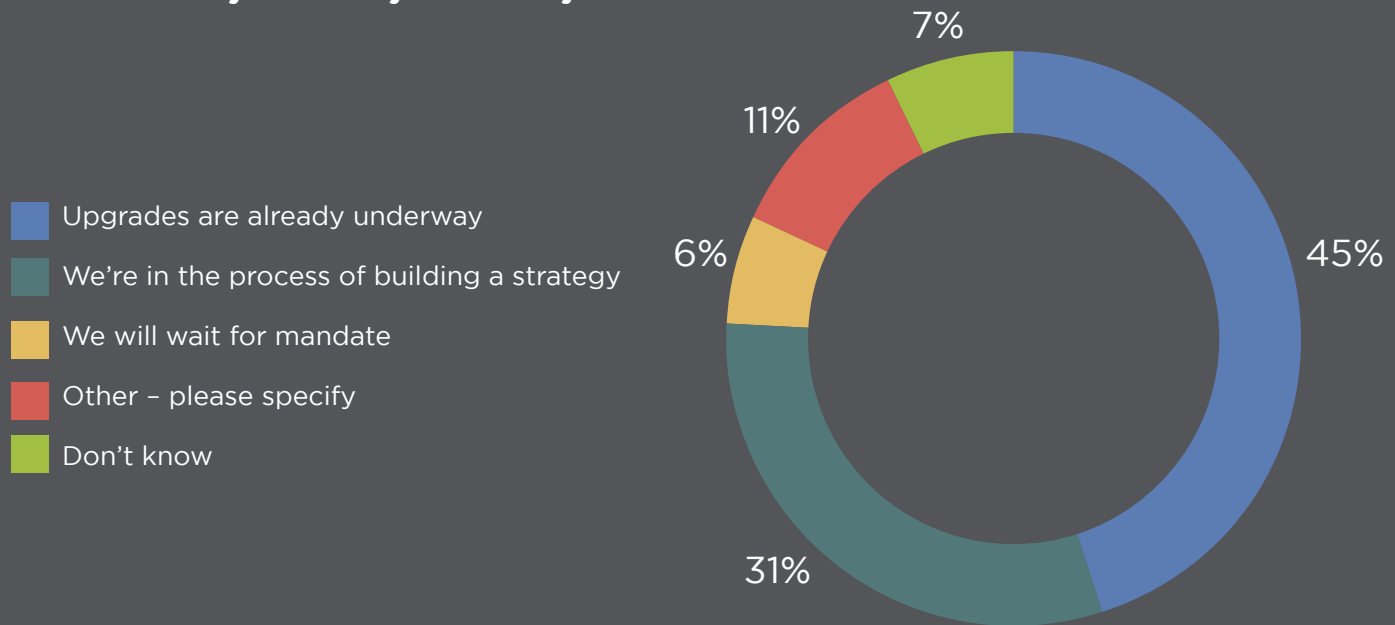
FIGURE 1: The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government has established the Building Safety Programme to ensure high-rise buildings are safer for residents and stakeholders alike. How aware are you of the programme and the proposed building reforms?



Encouragingly, of the 74% 'aware' of the programme, 20% of those who responded to the survey had actually taken part in the consultation process. Conversely, over a quarter of (26%) respondents had little or no

awareness of the programme. Given that the proposed changes will likely be mandated, this is a concern that should be addressed and is indicative of broader issues around awareness and the publicising of such programmes.

FIGURE 2: Changes to Government legislation within the Building Safety Bill may take up to two years to be mandated. Will you wait for government mandates to upgrade fire safety or have you already started?



On the subject of mandating, we asked respondents if their organisation would wait for the proposals to be enforced or refurb their high-rise buildings in advance of a potential deadline. In total, 45% of respondents said 'Upgrades are already underway', while 31% claimed to be 'in the process of building a strategy' to address these issues. Only 6% said they would wait for the mandate, which suggests that the majority of the public sector is proactive about fire safety and compliance.

Indeed, as one participant commented:

“We are already reviewing our fire and resident engagement policies, strategy and processes in anticipation of the forthcoming changes and making internal team structural changes to accommodate the new duty holder roles. We have a Fire Steering Group which oversees our activities.”

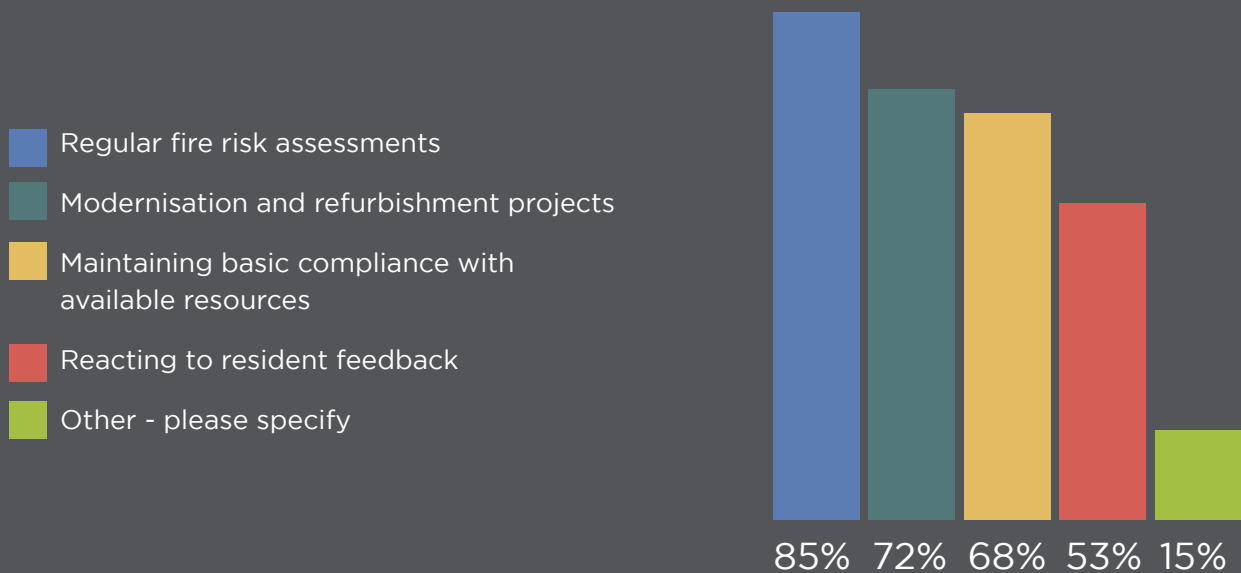
FIGURE 3: Which of the following statements best describes your organisation's approach to fire safety and compliance?



Additionally, when asked about their organisation's approach to fire safety and compliance, 78% said they were 'actively addressing fire safety in our housing stock'. But while a fraction (1%) said they were 'just beginning to address fire safety', only 14% felt

confident that their housing stock was fully compliant. This suggests that, while the public sector is proactive, more needs to be done to bring residential buildings up to code and ensure resident safety.

FIGURE 4: How do you currently minimise fire risk within your residential buildings?



Finally, we asked about their organisation’s approach to minimising fire risk within their residential buildings. Here, ‘Regular fire risk assessments’ was the most common method at 85%, while ‘Modernisation and refurbishment projects’ (72%), ‘Maintaining basic compliance with available resources’ (68%) and ‘Reacting to resident feedback’ (53%) all ranked highly. The comments also

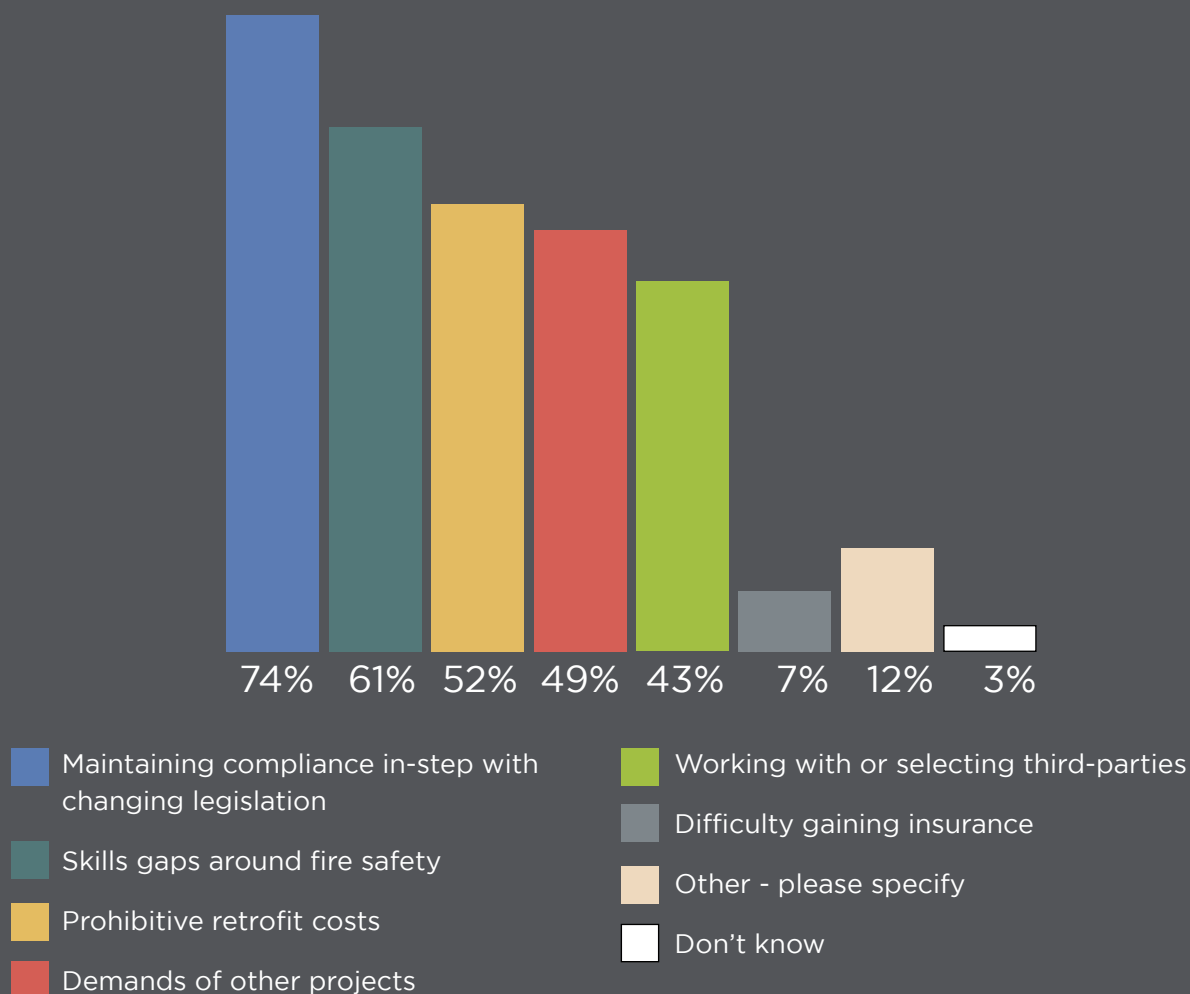
highlighted a number of fire protection methods not included in the survey options, including: resident engagement, evacuation systems, sprinkler systems, and dedicated fire safety and compliance teams. Clearly, public sector organisations are utilising many of the fire protection methods at their disposal to safeguard their residents.

In-house and external skills are a key concern

As part of our research, we asked survey participants to identify the biggest challenges when managing the fire safety and compliance of their housing stock. While

responses were broad, two - ‘Maintaining compliance in-step with changing legislation’ (74%) and ‘Skills gaps around fire safety’ (61%) - came out on top.

FIGURE 5: In your opinion, what are the biggest challenges when managing the fire safety and compliance of your housing stock?

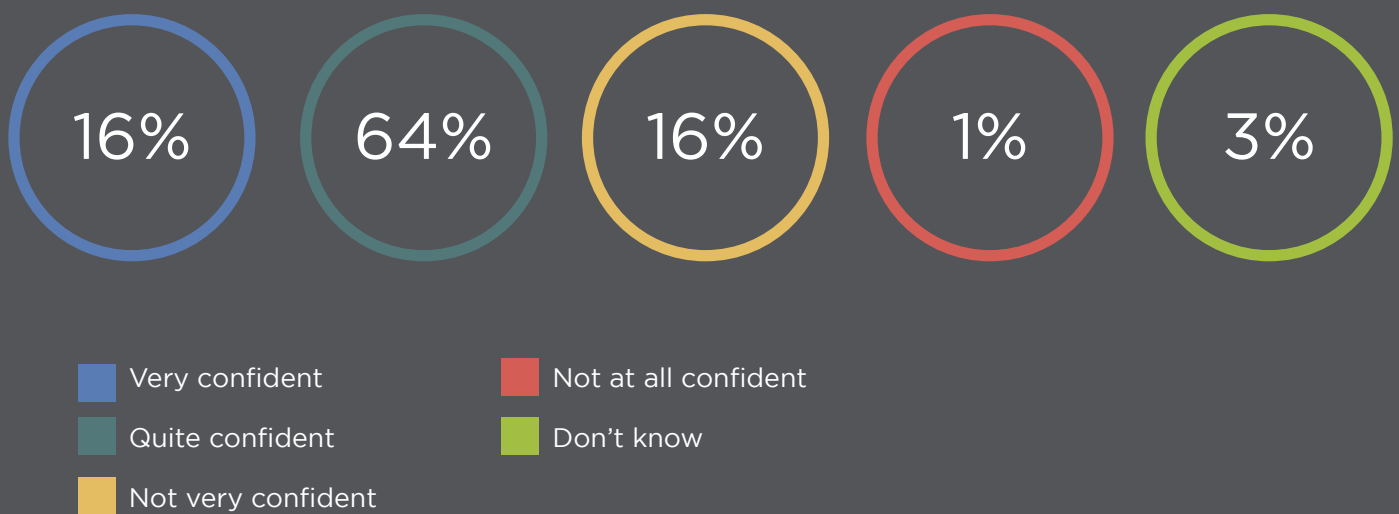


Interestingly, these barriers are intrinsically linked. If - as our findings suggest - a skills gap exists within the public sector, organisations are likely to find it increasingly difficult to remain in-step with legislation. This perhaps indicates that, in order to meet the requirements of evolving compliance, local authorities and housing associations may need to address having the necessary skills in place.

Additionally, 'Prohibitive retrofit costs' (52%), 'Demands of other projects' (49%) and 'Working with or selecting third-parties' (43%) all ranked fairly highly, which indicates that building stakeholders are facing a myriad of challenges. On this point, one respondent commented:

“Alongside the above items, customer engagement, not all fire safety relates to the building itself, a lot is around tenant behaviours and engagement. We work very hard with our customers to help them understand the importance of fire safety within their homes and buildings. We do come up against resistance though in terms of clear corridors and also access into our homes to undertake works such as electrical safety inspections.”

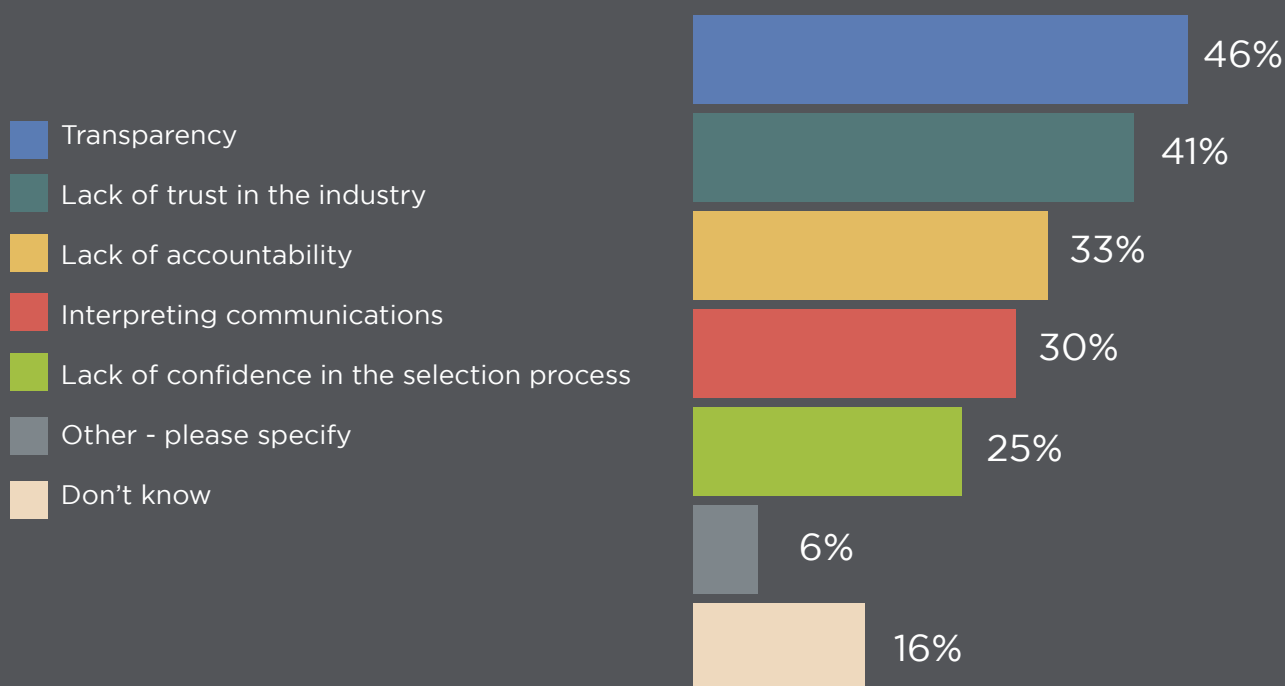
FIGURE 6: From a procurement perspective, how confident are you that you're able to source trustworthy suppliers for fire safety products?



Thinking about skills more broadly, we asked recipients about their confidence sourcing trustworthy suppliers for fire safety products. The outlook here was much more positive, with the majority (80%) feeling 'very' or 'quite

confident' in their ability to source the right supplier. However, given that 17% feel they're 'not very' or 'not at all confident', there's certainly a requirement for improvement.

FIGURE 7: What are the biggest challenges when working with fire safety product suppliers?



Additionally, when asked about the biggest procurement challenges when working with suppliers of fire safety products, 'Transparency' (46%) and 'Lack of trust in the industry' (41%) proved to be the two most common obstacles. Again, there is a correlation here between these responses. Lack of trust in the industry - a possible consequence of numerous high profile incidents of fire - has potentially led public sector stakeholders to be more cautious about who they hire and how they operate.

And while 'Lack of accountability' (33%), 'Interpreting communications' (30%) and 'Lack of confidence in the selection process' (25%) each received, respondents also made reference to an apparent 'Lack of materials' in the comments, with participant adding:

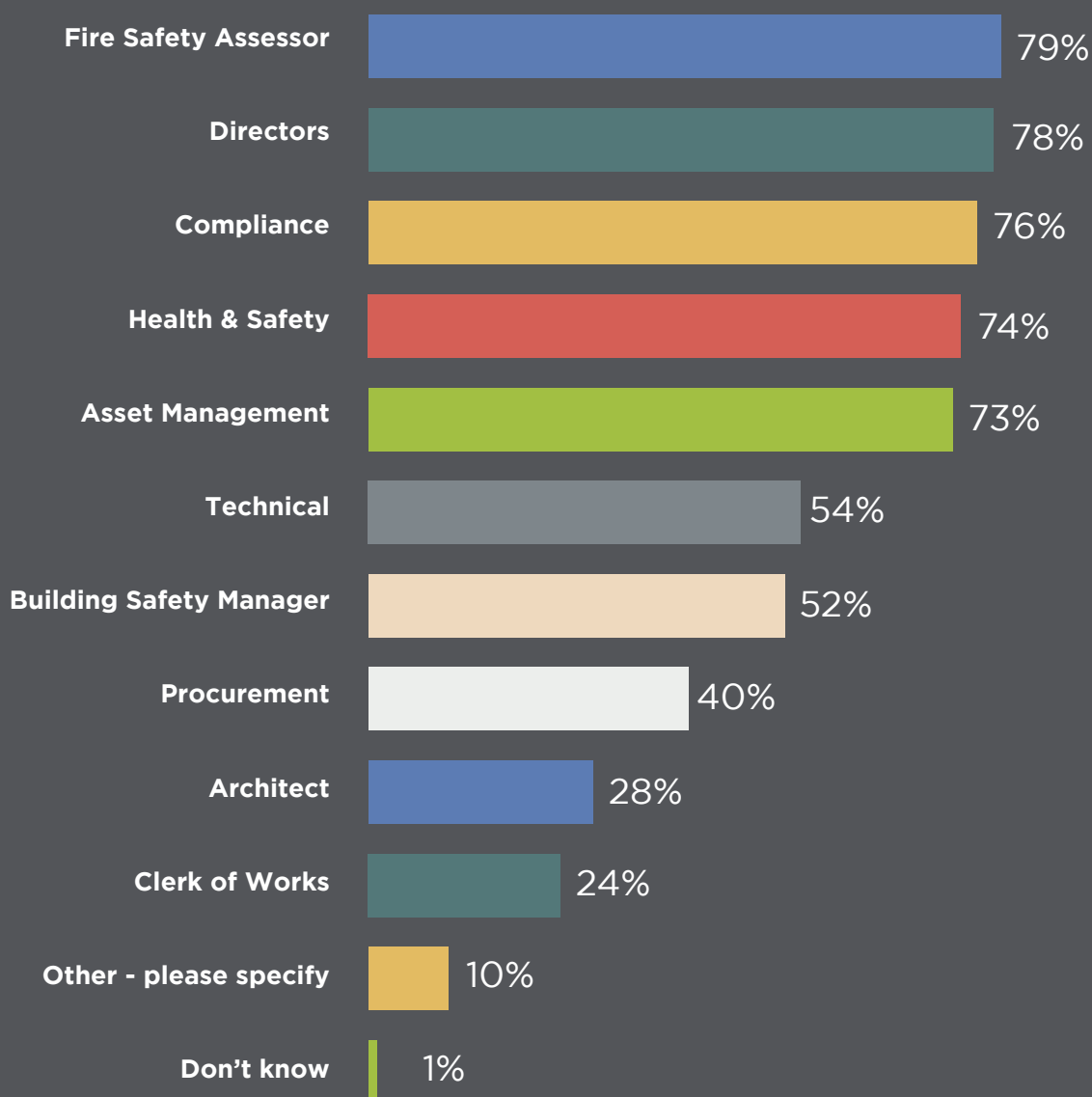
“There are supply chain challenges with component delivery, [and] there are a number of specialists in the industry who are significantly in demand.”

A complex picture for public sector decision-making

As part of our research, we also sought to understand how public sector stakeholders are handling decision-making around fire safety and compliance. Namely, which

departments are actively involved, and who bears ultimate responsibility for decisions made? Our findings offer a mixed picture.

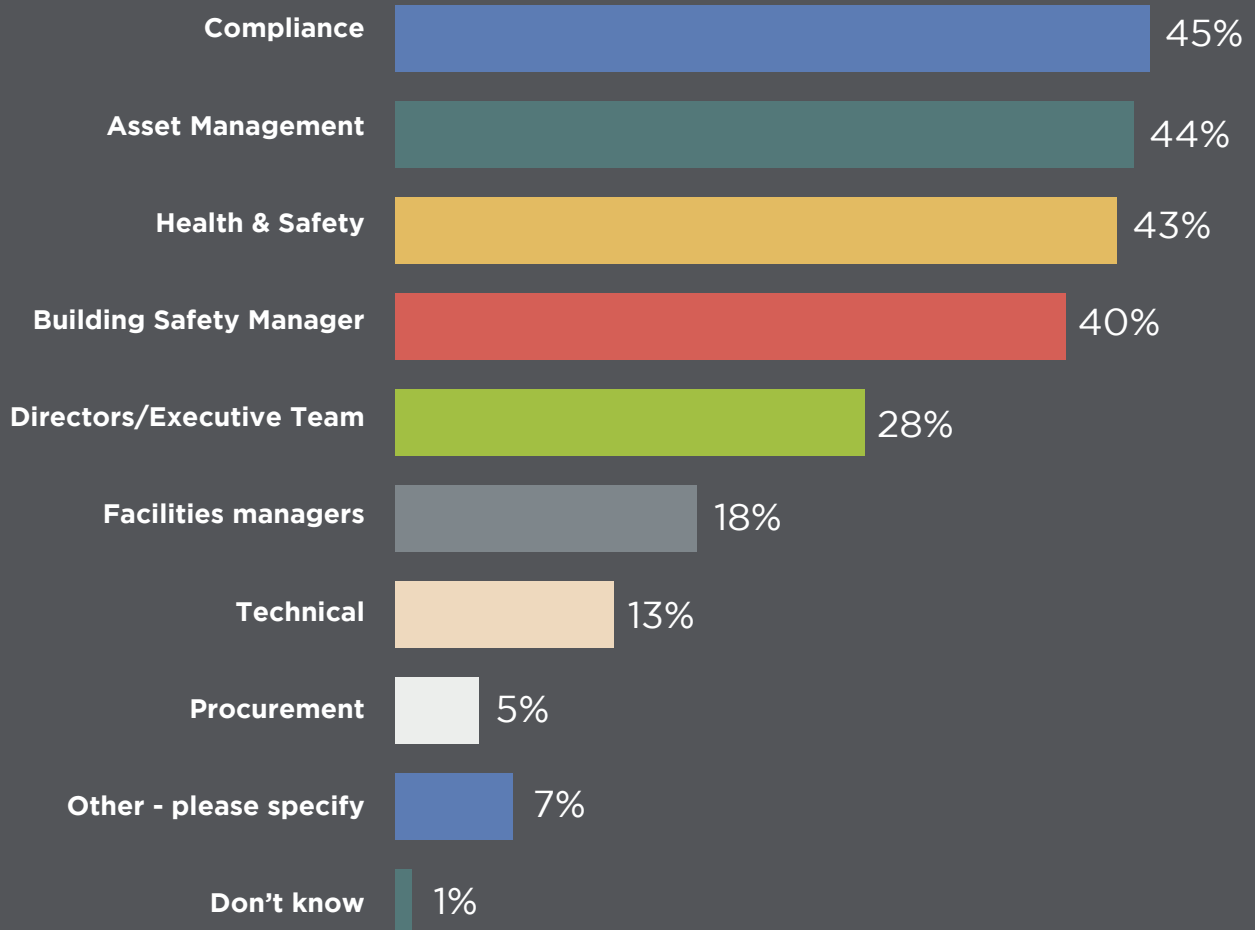
FIGURE 8: Thinking about the decision-making process, who is involved in the decision-making for fire safety and compliance?



According to our respondents, a broad spectrum of positions are involved in the decision-making process, including: 'Fire Safety Assessor' (79%), 'Directors' (78%), 'Compliance' (76%), 'Health & Safety' (74%) and 'Asset Management' (73%). In fact, responses were relatively high across the

board, which suggests that an increasing number of departments are now required to input on fire safety and compliance matters. However, while this kind of broader oversight is encouraging, it also could have the potential to delay decision-making at critical moments.

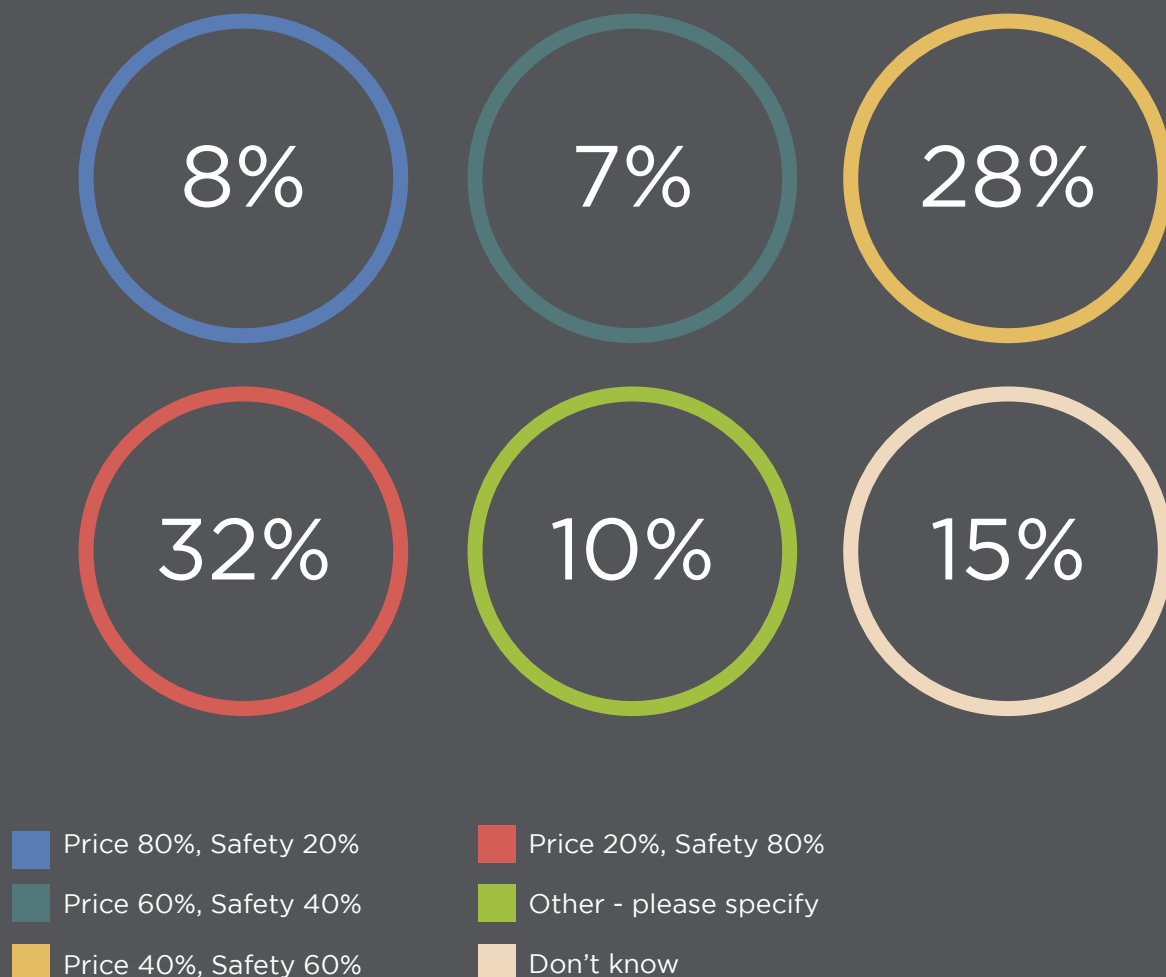
FIGURE 9: Thinking about the decision-making process, who ultimately is responsible for your organisation’s approach to fire safety and compliance?



Similarly, when asked who bears ultimate responsibility for decisions made, ‘Compliance’ (45%), ‘Asset Management’ (44%), ‘Health & Safety’ (43%) and ‘Building Safety Manager’ (40%) all ranked highly, with many of the

comments also pointing to ‘Directors’ as the people responsible. The variety of answers indicates that responsibility differs widely from organisation to organisation.

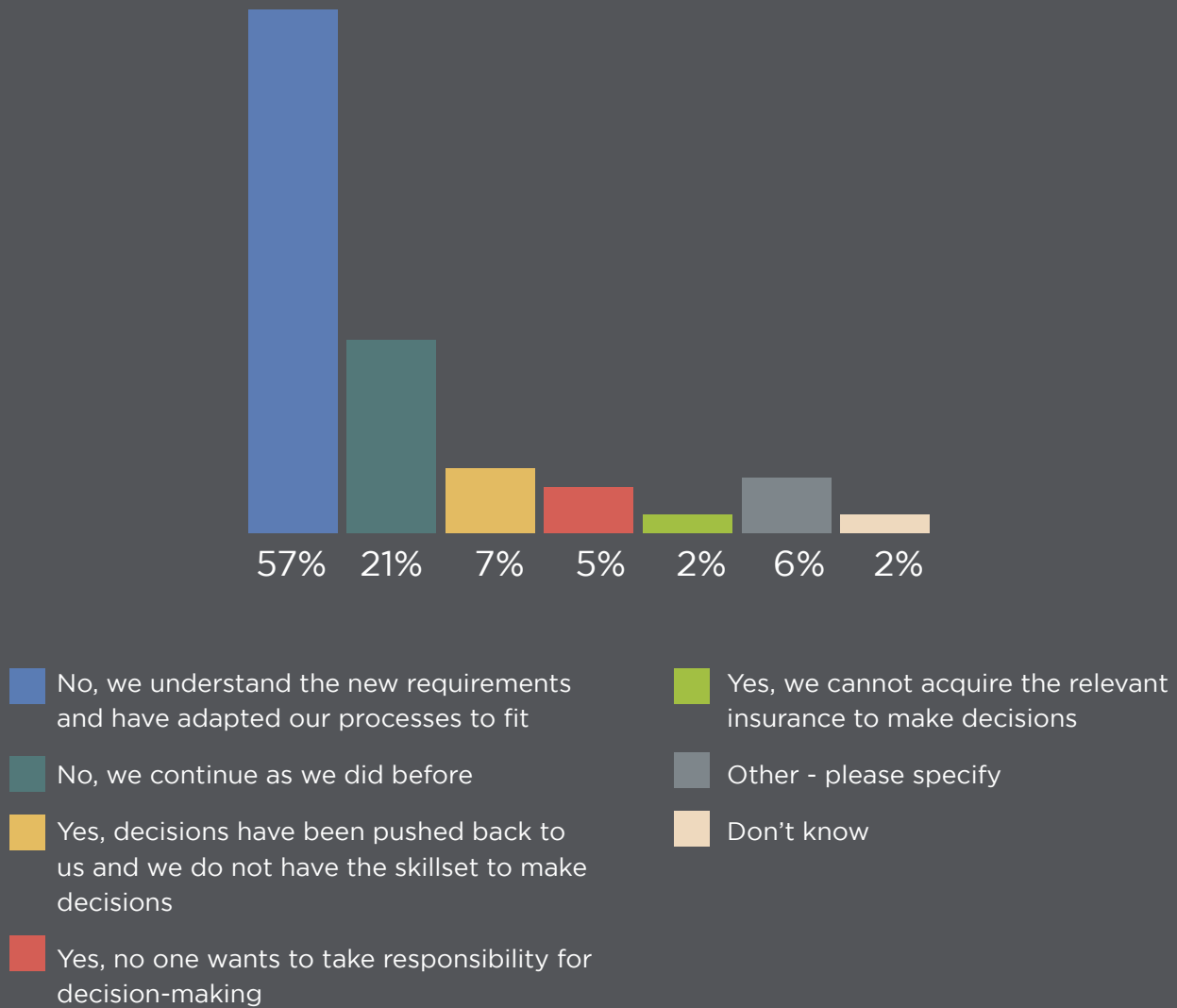
FIGURE 10: From a decision-making perspective, what is the percentage balance of consideration between price and safety?



Following this, we asked participants to consider the percentage balance between price and safety when procuring. In total, 32% valued safety over cost at a ratio of 80:20, while 28% said the balance was closer to 60:40 in favour of safety. However, 15% viewed

cost as the bigger consideration. Given that the safety of residents is at stake, this comes as quite a surprise and perhaps one that would benefit from a more holistic approach by those responsible for building safety.

FIGURE 11: Have recent events and potential changes in legislation created an environment that makes it difficult to make decisions?



Finally, we asked whether recent events and potential legislative changes had created an environment that made it difficult to make decisions. In total, 78% of respondents answered no, with 57% stating they're already working adapting to accommodate potential changes in legislation.

On the surface, this statistic seems broadly positive. However, the comments offer a decidedly more mixed picture, with one respondent adding: "The lack of synergy between existing legislation has made

decision-making hard, [and] the failure to combine other legislation makes decision-making difficult for us all. The attempt to make things easier to interpret has failed."

Clearly, it's encouraging that the majority of respondents remain confident, but we must also recognise that legislative changes must be transparent and accessible. Failure to do so may place more organisations at risk of falling behind, and the ramifications for residents could be very serious indeed.



CONCLUSION

Door-Stop International, part of the Masonite Group, has a long commitment to fire door safety. We believe that it is key to understand the motivations of our stakeholders and what influences safer choices in the procurement of fire doorsets. We are truly passionate about supporting our stakeholders to make informed decisions that contribute towards long term building safer buildings, and ultimately safer communities.

A main aim of this research was to bring clarity of the dynamics around procurement decision making in the public sector and the challenges that legally responsible individuals within organisations may face when it comes to understanding the complexities around fire doors systems, the legislation that surrounds them and making informed decisions to choose product that is fit for purpose now, and in the future.

Achieving life safety is crucial, particularly in light of the challenges for those managing

large housing stocks with different risk profiles, annual budgets and long-range spending plans. It is important to take a holistic, long term view. A fire can result in the most devastating consequences from the human cost perspective. It can result in total loss of a building and its contents.

Our survey results highlight the need for better education and also a serious long term look at managing budgets, not just at the point of purchase, but to account for the maintenance of products to ensure they remain fit for purpose thorough their life service. Our aim is to build awareness and knowledge in fire door safety, building a safer future by investment in quality.

For Masonite, when manufacturing our products, there are no compromises when it comes to the safety of building occupants.

APPENDIX 1: SURVEY QUESTIONS

Question 1: The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government has established the Building Safety Programme to ensure high-rise buildings are safer for residents and stakeholders alike. How aware are you of the programme and the proposed building reforms?

Answer	Percent
Very aware - we took part in the consultation process	20%
Aware - we're familiar with the proposed changes	54%
Not very aware - we've heard of the programme but have yet to fully familiarise ourselves with the findings	24%
Not aware - we haven't heard of the Building Safety Programme	2%
Don't know	0%

Question 2: Changes to Government legislation within the Building Safety bill may take up to two years to be mandated. Will you wait for government mandates to upgrade fire safety or have you already started?

Answer	Percent
Upgrades are already underway	45%
We're in the process of building a strategy	31%
We will wait for mandate	6%
Other - please specify	11%
Don't know	7%

Question 3: Which of the following statements best describes your organisation's approach to fire safety and compliance?

Answer	Percent
We're confident our housing stock is fully compliant	14%
We're actively addressing fire safety in our housing stock	78%
We're only just beginning to address fire safety in our housing stock	1%
We're unsure whether our housing stock is compliant or not	0%
Don't know	7%

**Question 4: How do you currently minimise fire risk within your residential buildings?
Please tick all that apply.**

Answer	Percent
Maintaining basic compliance with available resources	68%
Modernisation and refurbishment projects	72%
Regular fire risk assessments	85%
Reacting to resident feedback	53%
Other - please specify	15%
Don't know	0%

Question 5: Have recent events and potential changes in legislation created an environment that makes it difficult to make decisions?

Answer	Percent
Yes, no one wants to take responsibility for decision-making	5%
Yes, we cannot acquire the relevant insurance to make decisions	2%
Yes, decisions have been pushed back to us and we do not have the skillset to make decisions	7%
No, we continue as we did before	21%
No, we understand the new requirements and have adapted our processes to fit	57%
Other - please specify	6%
Don't know	2%

Question 6: Thinking about the decision-making process, who is involved in the decision-making for fire safety and compliance? Please tick all that apply.

Answer	Percent
Health & Safety	74%
Compliance	76%
Procurement	40%
Technical	54%
Building Safety Manager	52%
Asset Management	73%
Fire Safety Assessor	79%
Architect	28%
Clerk of Works	24%
Directors	78%
Other - please specify	10%
Don't know	1%

Question 7: Thinking about the decision-making process, who ultimately is responsible for your organisation’s approach to fire safety and compliance? Please tick all that apply.

Answer	Percent
Health & Safety	43%
Procurement	5%
Technical	13%
Compliance	45%
Asset Management	44%
Building Safety Manager	40%
Facilities managers	18%
Directors/Executive Team	28%
Other - please specify	7%
Don't know	1%

Question 8: From an investment perspective, to what extent is fire safety and compliance a priority compared to other day-to-day costs?

Answer	Percent
Critical priority	74%
Mid-level priority	21%
Low priority	3%
Don't know	2%

Question 9: From a decision-making perspective, what is the percentage balance of consideration between price and safety?

Answer	Percent
Price 80% Safety 20%	8%
Price 60% Safety 40%	7%
Price 40% Safety 60%	28%
Price 20% Safety 80%	32%
Other - please specify	10%
Don't know	15%

Question 10: Thinking about the condition of your existing housing stock, how confident are you that your housing stock is compliant with current fire safety regulations?

Answer	Percent
Very confident	15%
Quite confident	70%
Not very confident	11%
11% Not at all confident	3%
Don't know	1%

Question 12: In your opinion, what are the biggest challenges when managing the fire safety and compliance of your housing stock? Please tick all that apply.

Answer	Percent
Maintaining compliance in-step with changing legislation	74%
Demands of other projects	49%
Prohibitive retrofit costs	52%
Working with or selecting third-parties	43%
Skills gaps around fire safety	61%
Difficulty gaining insurance	7%
Other - please specify	12%
Don't know	3%

Question 13: Cladding has received a lot of focus and press coverage in recent years. How has that impacted on the priority of other fire safety initiatives?

Answer	Percent
We considered all fire safety requirements equally	74%
The focus on cladding has pushed all other fire safety work to the background	10%
Other - please specify	12%
Don't know	4%

Grid: To what extent do you agree with the following statements?

Question 14i: We have the internal skills and experience in place to make informed decisions regarding the safety of our housing stock.

Answer	Percent
Strongly agree	28%
Agree	61%
Disagree	9%
Strongly disagree	0%
Don't know	2%

Question 14ii: We have confidence in our ability to analyse and interpret fire safety data.

Answer	Percent
Strongly agree	35%
Agree	58%
Disagree	6%
Strongly disagree	0%
Don't know	1%

Question 14iii: We are able to foresee and mitigate risks around fire safety installations.

Answer	Percent
Strongly agree	20%
Agree	71%
Disagree	7%
Strongly disagree	0%
Don't know	2%

Question 15: From a procurement perspective, how confident are you that you're able to source trustworthy suppliers for fire safety products?

Answer	Percent
Very confident	16%
Quite confident	64%
Not very confident	16%
Not at all confident	1%
Don't know	3%

Question 16: What are the biggest challenges when working with fire safety product suppliers? Please tick all that apply.

Answer	Percent
Lack of accountability	33%
Lack of confidence in the selection process	25%
Lack of trust in the industry	41%
Interpreting communications	30%
Transparency	46%
Other - please specify	6%
Don't know	16%

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The research team at Surveys in Public Sector would like to take the opportunity to thank all of those who were kind enough to take part – and especially those who found the time to offer additional insight through their extra comments.

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