

A young woman with brown hair tied back, wearing a grey t-shirt and a blue patterned headband, is smiling warmly at the camera. She is in the middle of painting a wall. In her right hand, she holds a wooden-handled brush with blue paint on the bristles. In her left hand, she holds a red-handled paint roller with a blue roller cover. The background is a wall being painted white, with some paint splatters visible. To the left, a white bucket with a pair of orange sunglasses on its rim is partially visible. To the right, a red bucket containing paint is also partially visible.

**B&Q**

# The Way We Live Now: 2024



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# Boosted confidence, challenged gender stereotypes

As the world around us keeps evolving, we're continuing to embrace the positive benefits of improving our homes to make our lives better.

B&Q wants everyone to feel empowered to improve their homes. Our 'The Way We Live Now' report has shown how we keep adapting to make our lives better.

Listening to our customers is key to helping us make home improvement projects as easy and accessible as possible. Customers look most for convenience, whether that's the availability and choice of products, the speed and place of delivery, the installation, or help and support with kick starting or completing their projects.

We know that improving your home takes time, confidence, skill, and money. The importance of these factors, and the help consumers need, fluctuates over time and is often most influenced by the world we live in. Whereas during the pandemic we saw consumers taking on home improvement projects because they had more time, our latest research shows how the growth of 'how-to' videos across social media channels is equipping people with the capabilities and confidence to improve their homes themselves. Gen Z women are leading the charge in challenging gendered DIY stereotypes, and more and more customers are being inspired by social media to tackle home improvement head-on.

Not surprising, but possibly unexpected none the less, are the findings around the impact that the trade skills gap is having. Increasingly, the high demand for trade professionals is a reason for people doing more home improvement projects themselves, or for asking for help from family and friends. Our own research suggests the UK has a current shortfall of over 165,000 trade professionals, and this is expected to rise to a shortfall of 250,000 tradespeople by 2030, as the move towards greener homes fuels demand.

As well as investing in convenience and value, we're providing more help and advice through our colleagues in stores, at diy.com, and across our social channels, to help empower consumers with the confidence and know-how to take on projects themselves. We're also helping to tackle the trade skills shortage, and have pledged £1 million of funding for trade apprentices. And with the increasing number of women in DIY, we're looking to attract more women in to trade professions too.

Thank you to our customers who have contributed to this report by sharing the way they live now, providing invaluable insight into how we can help the nation build a better life.



Graham Bell, B&Q CEO



# There's a lot going on for our customers

In the last year, the UK population has faced rising prices and high interest rates. Despite these challenges, they have remained keen on improving their homes.

We're seeing:

- Increased interest in DIY & home improvement, particularly from women
- Tradespeople booked up months in advance
- More people in tune with home trends, which are moving quicker than ever

We're going to explore:

01

Challenging DIY stereotypes

02

The rise of the social media home improver

03

Ever-changing rooms

04

Tradespeople in high demand





## A slice of home life

### 01 Challenging DIY stereotypes

Breaking stereotypes...

93%

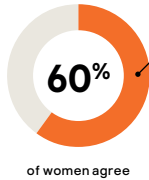
of women have completed home improvement projects in the past 12 months

78%

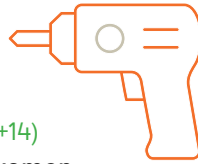
of women have completed projects involving tools

...and enjoying it, with younger generations leading the way

I enjoy doing DIY around my home



74% (+14)  
for Gen Z women



### 03 Ever-changing rooms

People are changing up their rooms frequently

57%

buy small things for their home at least every couple of months

And we see this even more from renters

65%<sup>(+8)</sup>

for renters

27%

change their home décor depending on the season

31%<sup>(+4)</sup>

for renters

### 02 The rise of the social media home improver

Social media is boosting home improvement confidence

Watching DIY videos made me realise I am able to do projects that I would have hired tradespeople to do

61%  
agree

51%  
agree

Because I have watched DIY videos, I have done DIY that I would have been too afraid to do



### 04 Tradespeople in high demand

Tradespeople are busy, so some jobs are going undone

53%

have looked for a tradesperson to do work in their home in the past year

15%

failed to book someone in for their project

When tradespeople can't be found for smaller projects, 48% of people do the project themselves



01

# Challenging DIY stereotypes

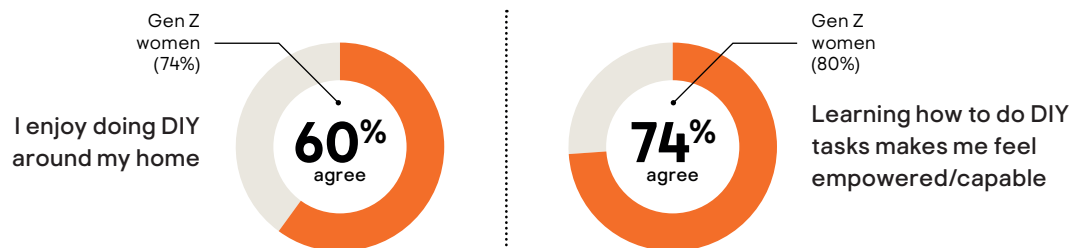
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# Women are feeling more confident at doing home improvement projects – going against stereotypes

Women have always been actively involved in DIY projects, but within the last few years we have seen an uptick in the proportion of women who are feeling confident taking on more complex projects.

For most women, in particularly younger “Gen Z” women, doing DIY is both enjoyable and empowering.



Over half of women say they're good or excellent at DIY, which remains lower than the number of men, but perhaps not by the margin one could be led to believe.

And in the younger generations, the difference is even smaller.



## CASE STUDY: Claire

Claire bought her flat three years ago. When she moved in, she decided that she wanted to put her own mark on what was a blank canvas. She was also determined that she would do all of the DIY herself.

This was partly to save money, but mainly to feel the sense of achievement and feel proud of her handiwork.

One of her key tasks was tiling the bathroom walls. With some help from Instagram videos, she completed the job over the course of two days, finishing it off by hanging a mirror to make use of the little natural light the room gets.

Aside from the tiling, she has painted almost every wall and door in her home, taking joy in seeing and showing off the end results.

### I am good (or better) at DIY

70% Agree

men

73% Agree

Gen Z men

55% Agree

women

69% Agree

Gen Z women



## Challenging DIY stereotypes

# Women are improving their DIY skills and using more power tools

### This is especially true for Gen Z



The jobs that are often perceived as 'hard to do' and 'more difficult' are increasingly being shown to be easier than expected, as women have gained confidence and realised that they enjoy and can do DIY. As one project becomes two, becomes three, we're seeing women taking on increasingly ambitious projects as they build their skills and confidence.

This is being led by younger women, who seem to have a real can-do, will-do attitude, getting inspiration from around them and expressing themselves creatively through their DIY.

93%

of women have made their own home improvements in the last year

78%

of women have used some sort of DIY tool in the past year

1 in 4

women used a drill last year... more than have used a sewing machine

28%

of women have used 'heavy' tools in the past year, such as floor sanders and power saws

27%

of women have done a project themselves because they couldn't find a tradesperson to do it

## CASE STUDY: Melanie

Melanie is a first-time buyer, living with her partner on the outskirts of Cambridge. Keen to update her home with limited funds, she enrolled on an evening course at her local college to learn basic DIY.

Armed with this knowledge, along with the ideas and inspiration she's picked up from TikTok and Pinterest, she's transformed the look and feel of her home, room by room, on her own.

From painting and wallpapering to basic plastering and even the electrics, Melanie has transformed a dated, unfashionable home into a stylish, on-trend space that she's proud of.





# Alongside women taking on harder projects, we're seeing men take on softer projects

This is led by younger men taking an interest in soft furnishings, décor and trends



**66%**  
of men say that the way their home looks has a big impact on how they feel

**1 in 3**  
men say that it's important that their home is on-trend (the same as for women)

**1 in 5**  
of all cushions bought last year were by men with no involvement from others

## CASE STUDY: Mark

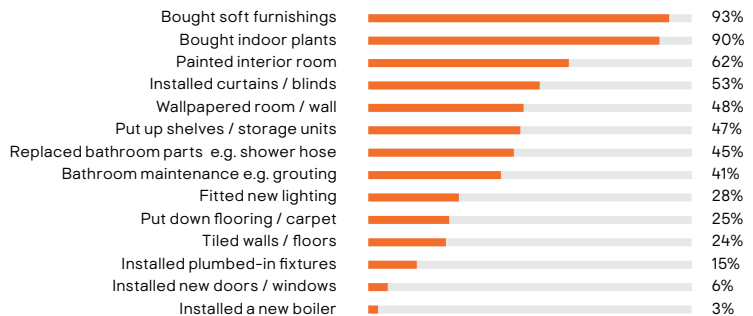
Mark takes personalisation and décor seriously. He brings his skills to bear on creating a 70s sci-fi style in his Bethnal Green home.

From vinyl-ing his cupboards to making sure that every door has a different handle, he is always working to align his home with his personality.

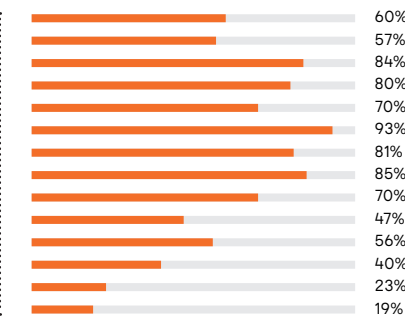
While some of these projects are large and structural (such as modifying his staircase), many are about the fine details that make a home feel personal.



% of women who conducted the work themselves for each project in the last year

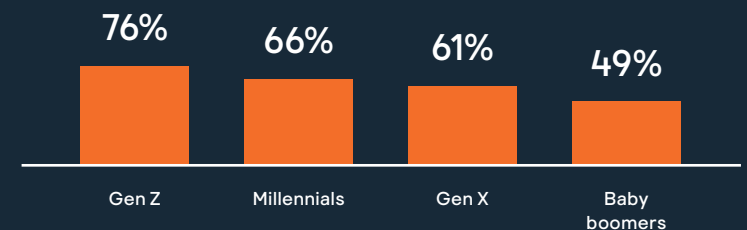


compared to men



It's Gen Z men who are leading the change of men being more present in traditionally female categories

% men buying soft furnishing for the home, by themselves



02

## **The rise of the social media home improver**

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## The rise of the social media home improver

# Social media is giving people the confidence to have a go and start projects

Pre-internet, home improvement was more of a niche hobby. To discover the latest trends you had to seek out a home style magazine or take a trip to a store to browse for products or speak to staff.

Recently, social media, and in particular social media influencers, have created a step change in home improvement content, supplying the inspiration, know-how and support needed to plan, do and enjoy projects.

The modern home improver can now get onto the leading edge of a trend, as well as find out how to do it easily, cheaply, and quickly. They can then revel in the Likes and comments once they post pictures and films of their home improvement skills onto their feed.

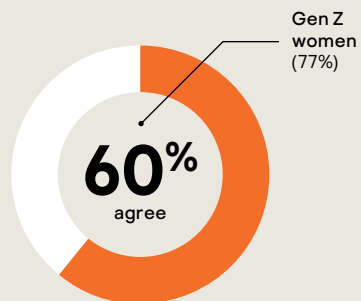


Watching videos of people doing DIY has made me realise I am able to do projects myself that I would previously have hired tradespeople to do

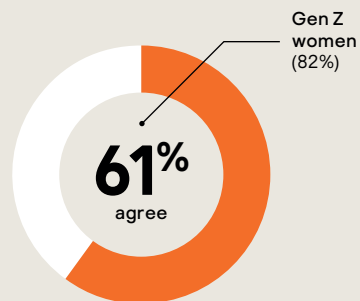
Seeing women doing more complex home DIY on social media has inspired me to do more myself

Because I have watched DIY videos, I have done DIY in my house in the past year that I previously would have been too afraid to do myself

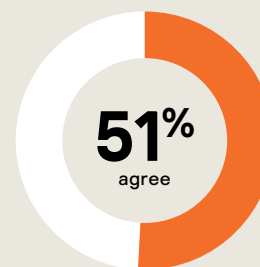
I have been influenced to buy something for my home by an influencer on social media



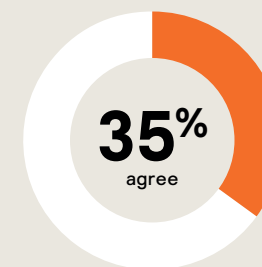
Everyone



All women



Everyone



Everyone

# Not only is social media boosting confidence, it's teaching skills

It's being used for all types of projects, to learn how to get the work done

The fear of getting it wrong. The worry of something catastrophic happening. A missing vital part. Water spraying everywhere. A terrible finish.

It's much easier to avoid all of this if you've watched multiple videos beforehand. You've seen how the project should go, including the '5 biggest mistakes' people make when completing the project. You may even have received the equivalent of expert tuition from a subject matter professional.

This all means that you can be confident that not only is your project going to be completed, but it will also be completed to a fantastic standard.

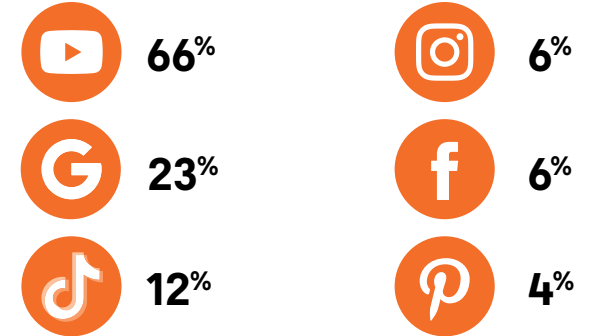
Given all these advantages, it's understandable that more than 2/3 of home improvement projects are completed with the help of social media. What is surprising is the extent to which people, especially the younger generations, are relying on social media such as TikTok, for even the largest, most difficult projects.

## Usage of different forms of social media, to complete projects



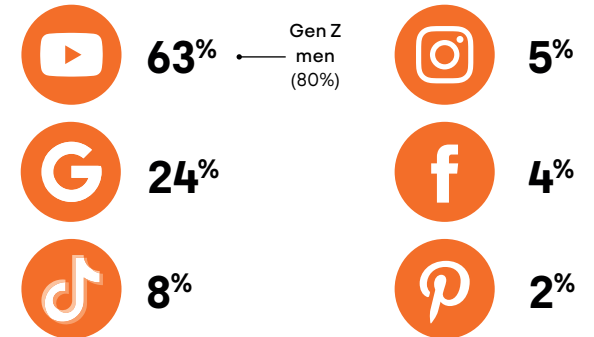
### Simple projects

(e.g. painting, putting up a shelf, wallpapering)



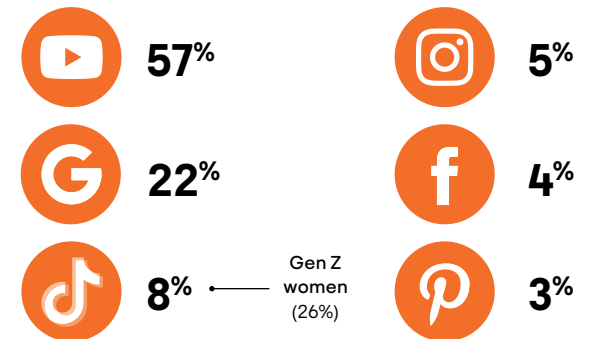
### Moderate projects

(e.g. fix a washing machine, tile a bathroom, install a radiator)



### Difficult projects

(e.g. build a kitchen, install a bathroom)





# Visiting shops continues to be the top source of inspiration alongside social media

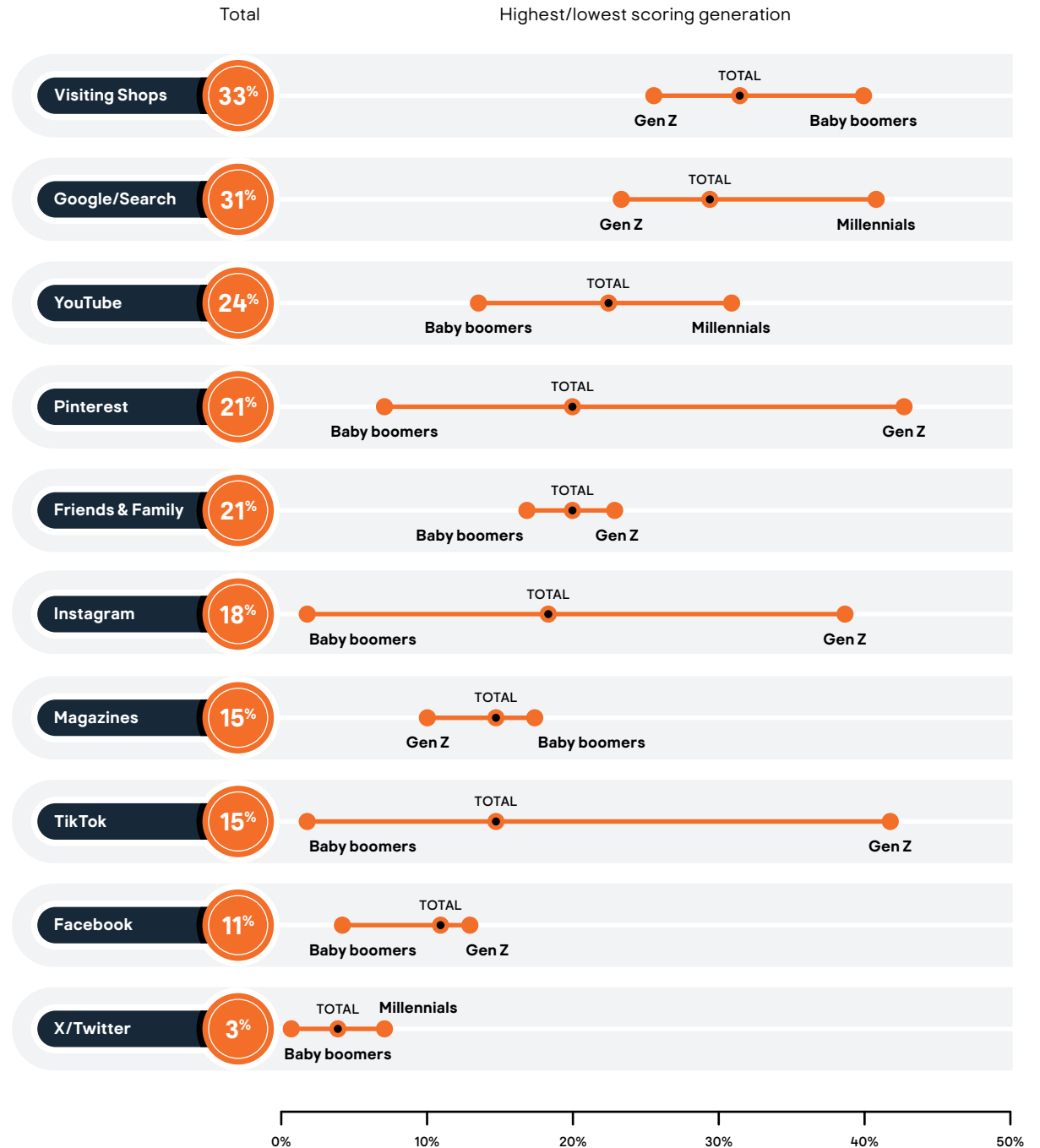
## Different channels appeal to different generations

Inspiration, at an overall level, looks like it is evenly split between in-store and online. However, a look into the preferences across the generations shows a more complicated picture.

While younger generations clearly lean towards technology, they aren't rejecting physical shops. The opposite is the case for the older generations though. They have very limited interest in the newest social media sites, resulting in a gulf between the baby boomers (who mostly reject TikTok and Instagram) and Gen Z, who see them as a top source of inspiration.

It's interesting to see that millennials are the top users of some technologies. They are more likely to use search engines, YouTube and Twitter. These are still social media channels, but could be seen as part of the last generation, which Gen Z are leaving behind.

Usage of different methods, to get inspiration for home improvement projects



03

## Ever-changing rooms

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## Ever-changing rooms

# People are changing some rooms multiple times across the year

Home improvement is a continuous process, aimed at constantly trying to improve day-to-day life

For those who enjoy DIY, improving their skills and discovering fresh inspiration, it's fair to say that regular home improvement is a rewarding hobby. With the definition of a home improvement project being anything from a new set of cushion covers, to building a house extension, it's easy to keep that feeling of continual improvement going.

For many, the aim is to create a home that reflects who they are, how they live their lives and what is important to them. This can change regularly, so the home has to change too. As winter turns into spring, the living room may need to convert from a cosy Netflix den into a bright and fresh social hub; how better to communicate that than with a fresh coat of paint and appropriate soft furnishings?



## Switching it up

A room can be quickly and easily changed up for different seasons with some cushion covers, fresh pictures in the frames and the addition or removal of items like blankets, candles and indoor plants.

The definition of a home improvement project is expanding

Meaning that home improvement becomes constant

It's all about expression, feeling good and being in-tune

To the point that some update their homes with the seasons

# 85%

consider updating décor (cushions, lampshades, etc.) as a home improvement project

# 57%

buy smaller things for the home at least every couple of months

# 75%

feel that the way their home looks has a big impact on how they feel

# 59%

feel that it is important that their home fits their personality

# 40%

like to switch up their décor regularly to keep it fresh & interesting

# 27%

change their home décor depending on the season



# The rental market and easy DIY come together

## The number of UK renters is increasing, and they want where they live to feel like their home

The proportion of adults renting in the UK has been increasing in recent years. Renting typically meant magnolia walls, limited personalisation and absolutely no picture hooks.

However, there are now more and more DIY products that make decorating a rental home to suit your style, easier. There are paints that cover better, decals that can be peeled off and hanging kits that don't damage walls, as well as the possibility of improving the home with items that you can take with you when you move.

This means that we're seeing renters leading the way on a lot of the small change home improvements. They are more likely to buy small items for the home, freshen up their paint and change their décor to match the season.

Amy rents her home with her partner and young family. With such a busy household it feels important to her to create a warm and inviting home that is a place of relaxation for her and her family.

After spending years with magnolia walls, she realised that it would be important for the family's wellbeing to create a home that expressed who they were and made them more comfortable.

Starting small, wallpapering the downstairs bathroom, Amy's projects grew to include creating a cosy living room, then refreshing it again a couple of years later with some simple aesthetic purchases – wallpapers, throws, rug and cushions.

The most recent project has been a Harry Potter themed bedroom for her daughter, which will soon be updated again, nine months after it was finished, as her daughter has started secondary school and discovered new interests.



Renters versus overall (in red)

65%

~~57%~~

buy smaller things for the home at least every couple of months

42%

~~40%~~

like to switch up their décor regularly to keep it fresh & interesting

31%

~~27%~~

change their home décor depending on the season



**04**

# **Tradespeople in high demand**

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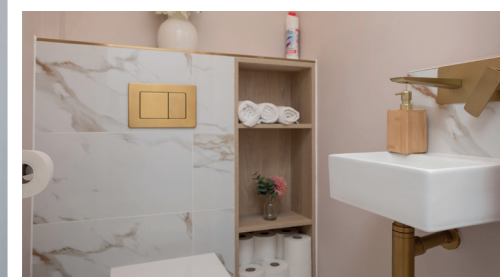
Tradespeople in high demand

# Consumer demand for tradespeople remains high

but they're often not available

We've seen how the UK population is continuing to invest time, effort and money into their homes. While many are improving their skills and becoming more willing to have a go at projects themselves, others still seek the help of a tradesperson.

A shortfall of skilled trade professionals means that many tradespeople in the UK, particularly specialists, are booked up months in advance, and so are more difficult to find. For some, this means delaying planned home improvement projects, while for others it's a reason to try to do it themselves.



81%

of tradespeople get booked up far in advance

66%

think that it's getting more difficult to find tradespeople for home DIY projects

61%

think there are fewer tradespeople around than in the past

54%

struggle to get tradespeople to respond to their initial enquiries

Just over half of the UK population looked for tradespeople in the past year - most of them successfully booked them in, but this figure could be improved

53%

have looked for a tradesperson to do work in their home in the past year

15%

failed to book a tradesperson for their project

16%

for multiple projects

37%

for a specific project

## CASE STUDY | Nathan

Nathan and his family bought their home in 2021. Since then, he has "ripped the house to shreds" to renovate it and make it unique.

The amount of work that he has been doing would make using a tradesperson prohibitively expensive and would slow down his progress. So, he has done most of the work himself, learning online and bringing in professionals only when needed.

His projects span from large scale bathroom installation to high tech fixtures and finishing touches.

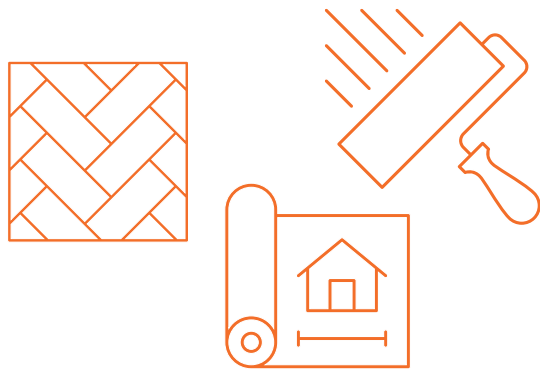


# The high demand for tradespeople is leading to more people doing projects, especially simpler ones, themselves

## It's easier to find a tradesperson for a larger project

In a market where tradespeople are in demand, they are better able to pick the projects they want to do. For them, bigger projects mean less frequent supply runs to start up a job, a consistent place of work and an easier-to-manage schedule with fewer client phone calls.

This means that the high demand for tradespeople is showing up most for simple and moderate-difficulty projects. For simple projects this is less of a problem, as people are skilling up, finding the time, and doing the job themselves. For moderate-difficulty projects, they're asking for help from friends or family to get the project done.



### Job type for which a tradesperson could not be found

29%

Simple projects

(e.g. painting, putting up a shelf, wallpapering)

50%

Moderate projects

(e.g. fix a washing machine, tile a bathroom, install a radiator)

21%

Difficult projects

(e.g. build a kitchen, install a bathroom)

### What then happened to that job?

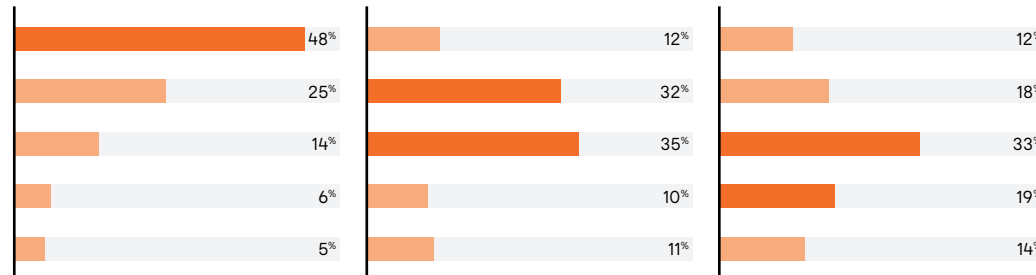
Did the job myself

Got friends/family to do it

Postponed the project until a tradesperson could find the time

Postponed the project until I could afford a tradesperson

Decided not to do the project



# Methodology and credits

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This research was conducted by The Source, an independent research agency. 48 in-depth UK home visits were conducted as part of this research in November 2023. 2,000 members of the UK public, aged 18+, were surveyed in January 2024. A further 1,000 were interviewed in February 2024.

The different generations were defined as such:

Gen Z (age 18-29), Millennial (age 30-44), Gen X (age 45-59), Baby boomers (age 60+)