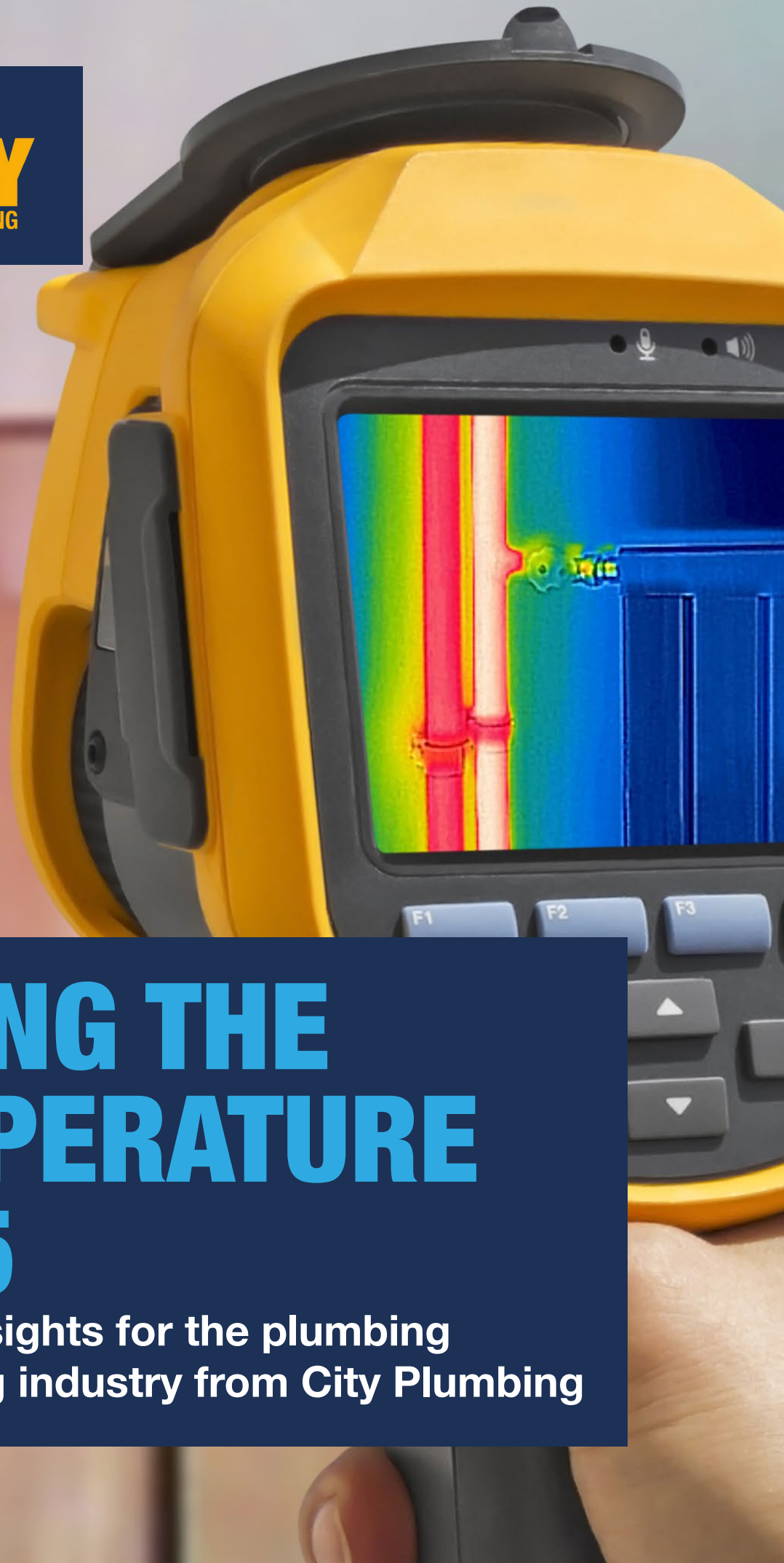
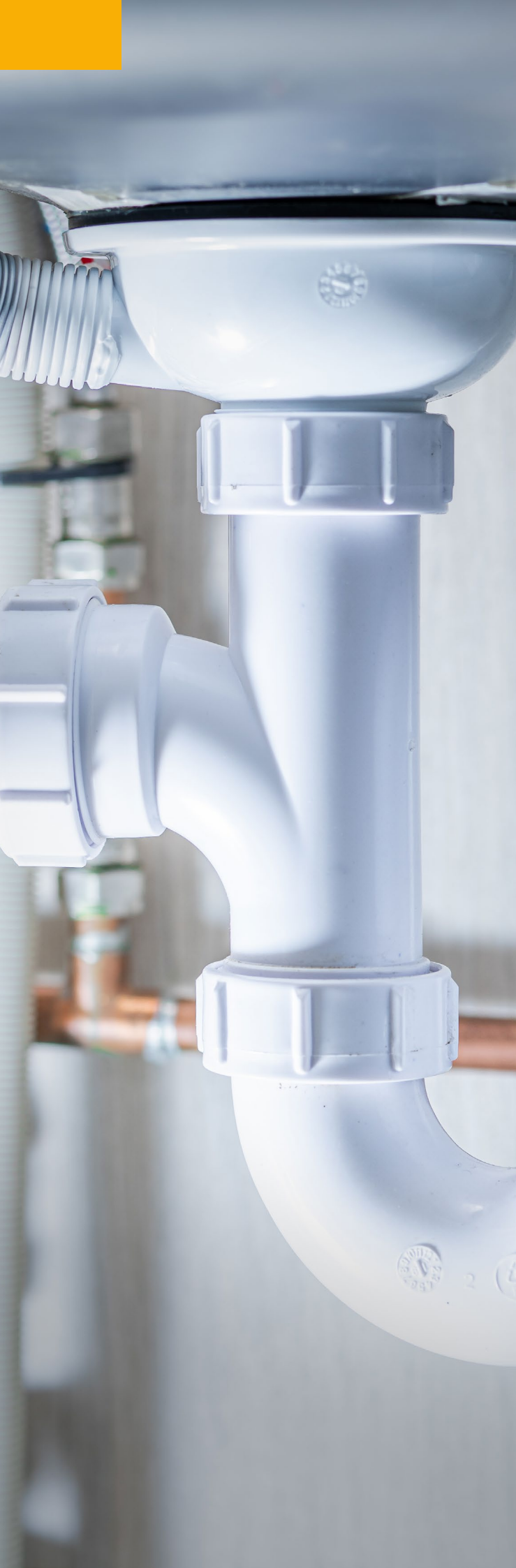




TAKING THE TEMPERATURE 2025

Industry insights for the plumbing
and heating industry from City Plumbing



Welcome to Taking the Temperature 2025

The plumbing and heating industry is evolving rapidly. During a time of growing economic, environmental, and technological change, the voices of those on the ground have never been more important. As market leaders, City Plumbing wants to make installers' lives easier by responding to changing opportunities and challenges. That's why we've developed our first Taking the Temperature report.

To uncover the realities of working in the industry today, we've carried out bespoke market research with 500 UK plumbers and heating installers. The results show an industry with strong foundations and opportunities. Professionals across the board are reporting high levels of work and optimism, strong customer demand, effective collaboration across the trades and new areas of growth, such as in renewable technologies and bathroom renovations. Yet despite this positive outlook, long-term challenges remain, from an ongoing skills shortage and the risk of talent loss overseas, to the need for greater support with training, apprenticeships and digital adoption.

Through this research, we explore the current state of the industry, the opportunities and challenges faced by plumbers and heating installers, and the ways in which businesses like City Plumbing are working to support professionals as they adapt, grow and thrive.

Whether we're helping professionals access training in renewables, streamlining admin tasks with digital tools, or rewarding hard work with meaningful incentives, this report highlights the crucial steps needed to build a resilient and future-ready workforce.

Dave Evans, Chief Executive Officer
at Highbourne Group.

About the research

The research was carried out in March 2025 and surveyed 500 UK plumbers and heating installers.

> An optimistic outlook for the industry

There is a clear sense of optimism among plumbing and heating professionals, with the majority reporting a strong market and levels of work. Over three quarters (78%) of those surveyed believe the outlook for the industry is positive in terms of the volume of work available in the UK. While this figure is slightly lower among sole traders (65%) and businesses with 1-49 employees (72%), the sentiment remains broadly confident across the board.

84% of plumbers and heating installers have enough work to meet their needs and ambitions

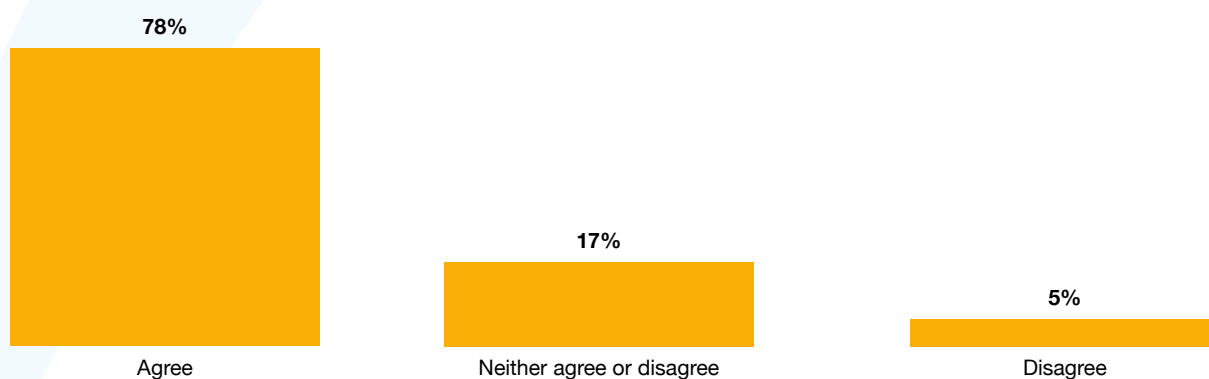
Most professionals are currently satisfied with their workload, with an average of 84% saying they have enough work to meet their needs and

ambitions. This is particularly true for sole traders (88%), indicating a healthy demand for services from self-employed plumbers and heating installers.

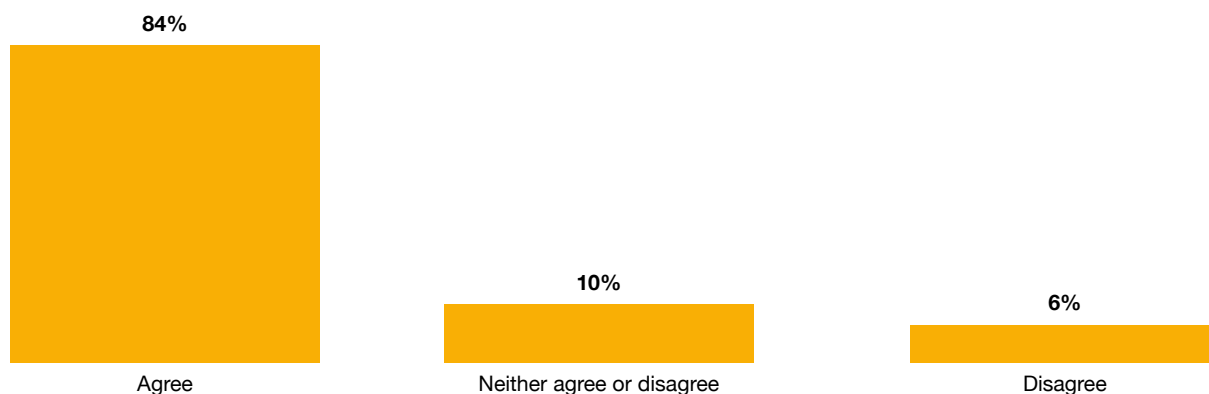
Collaboration within the industry also appears strong, with 80% of respondents saying it is easy to find and work with other plumbers and heating installers on projects. This high level of cooperation is a positive indicator for the industry's continued growth and resilience.

Alongside this, a significant shift in customer behaviour is being noted, with 80% saying there is now more demand to repair and maintain existing heating systems rather than replace them entirely. This trend is consistent across sole traders and small businesses, suggesting ongoing opportunities for maintenance and retrofit services.

The outlook is positive for plumbers and heating installers in terms of the amount of work opportunities there are in the UK



I have the right amount of work for what I need and want



> Plugging the skills drain

While our research shows a strong domestic market and healthy workloads, the long-term sustainability of the sector is under threat from a growing skills shortage and the lure of overseas opportunities.

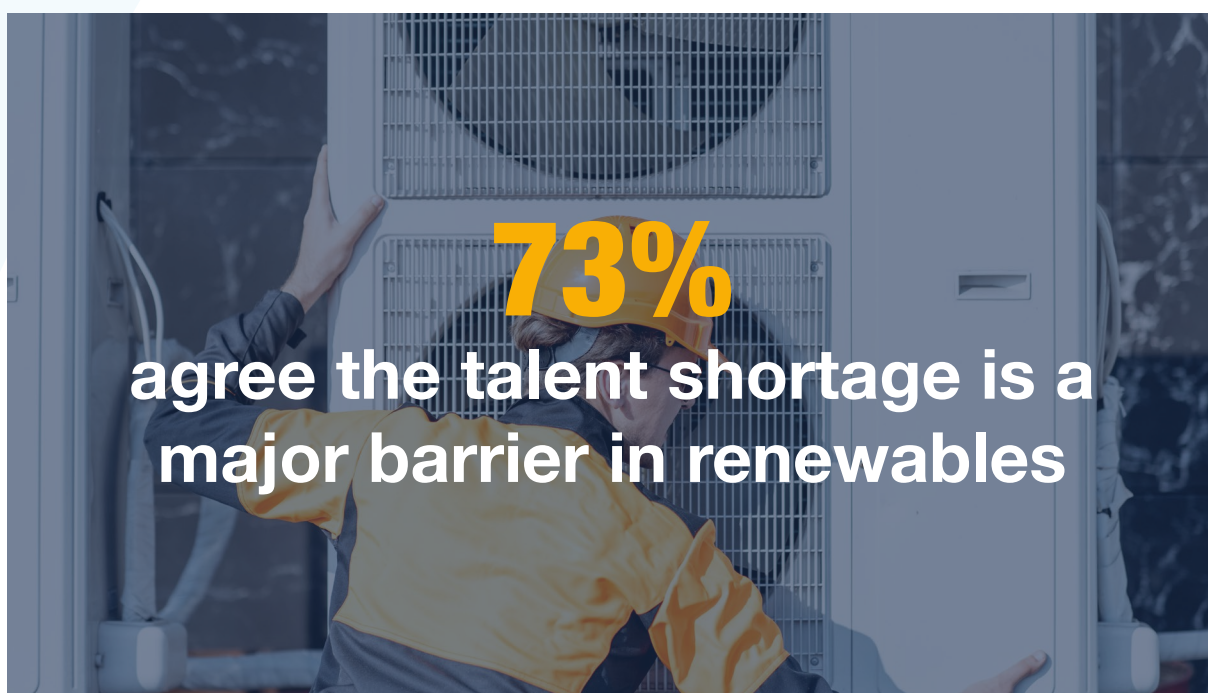
Nearly three-quarters (72%) of plumbers and heating installers said they would consider moving overseas for better salaries, echoing wider industry trends. In August 2023, research from Rated People revealed a sharp rise in UK tradespeople searching for jobs abroad, including a 171% increase in Google searches for plumbing roles in Saudi Arabia.

The skills challenge is particularly crucial in renewables, where 73% of professionals agree the talent shortage is a major barrier. As the industry shifts towards low-carbon technologies, the need for trained installers in solutions such as heat pumps is growing rapidly. In response, 85% of those surveyed want to see more financial support for training and upskilling in renewables – a sign that the workforce is willing to adapt, provided the right investment is in place.

With the shortage of skilled renewable installers ongoing, City Plumbing has maintained and grown its partnership with GTEC Training since February 2023, helping over 500 installers complete LCL Awards-accredited courses in heat pumps, solar PV, and EV charging.

The initiative expanded in 2024 with a second centre of excellence opening in Basildon and a mobile training rig deployed across five UK sites, making training more accessible.

On top of that, City Plumbing has partnered with VitoEnergy to launch a new heat pump installation umbrella scheme offering non-Microgeneration Certification Scheme (MCS) accredited installers a fully supported route to access government grants. It also provides added benefits, including trade account prices and financial flexibility.



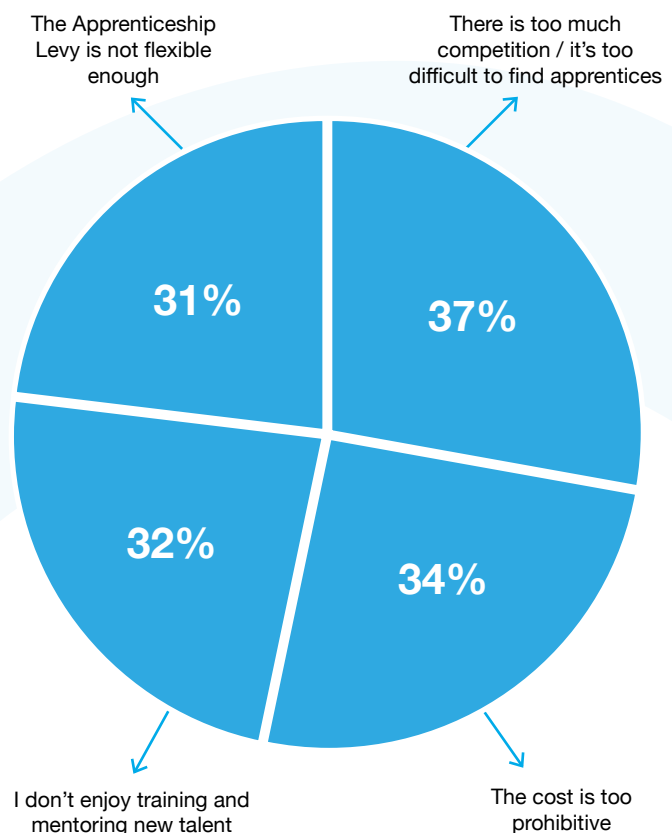
Apprenticeships remain one of the most effective ways to build a strong pipeline of talent in the industry. The majority (78%) of plumbers and heating installers believe apprenticeships are vital to the future of the industry. However, the likelihood of employing apprentices varies depending on its size. While nearly 80% of businesses with up to 49 employees hire apprentices, just 29% of sole traders do the same.

78% believe apprenticeships are vital to the future of plumbing and heating

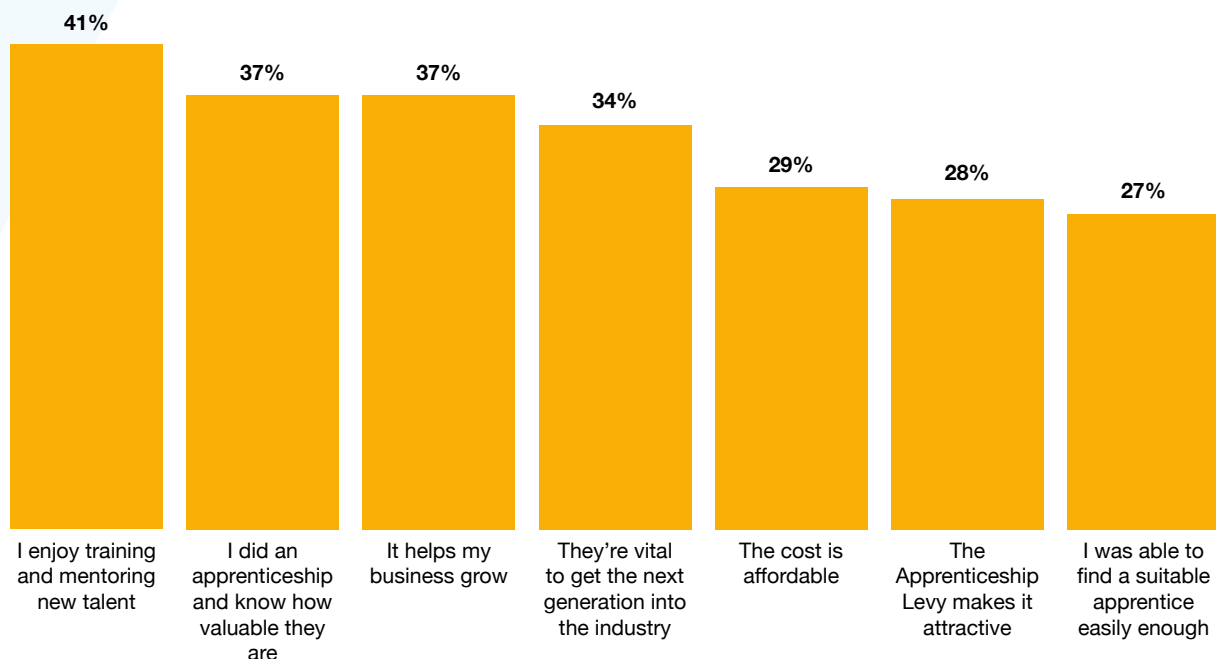
For those who do take on apprentices, motivations are down to both personal experience and business benefit. Over two-fifths (41%) enjoy training new talent, 37% recognise the value they gained from their own apprenticeship, and another 37% say taking on apprentices helps their business grow.

However, there are barriers for some professionals. Difficulties in finding suitable candidates (37%), high costs (34%), and concerns about the flexibility of the Apprenticeship Levy (31%) are among the main reasons some plumbers and heating installers don't currently recruit and train apprentices.

Why don't you work with/hire apprentices?



Why do you work with/hire apprentices?





> Training and upskilling

Addressing the skills shortage and plugging the potential skills drain will require coordinated effort from across the industry. With the right financial backing, policy reform and ongoing support for training and apprenticeships, the plumbing and heating sector can build a workforce that's fit for the future and inspired to stay. The demand for skilled installers is only going to grow, especially as we see more focus on specialisms such as heat pumps, so it's vital we invest in developing and retaining that talent here in the UK.

That's why at City Plumbing we are committed to investing in this area through our partnership with GTEC Training, as well as training hundreds of City Plumbing in-branch colleagues, upskilling local teams who can advise on renewable technologies and streamlining our supply chain. We also develop our own digital tools, such as our air source heat pump kit, which allows users to identify the most suitable system for a property in just four easy steps, which is complemented by a complete assembly kit of all the components required for a seamless installation.

> Training and upskilling in renewables

With the electrification of heat central to the UK's transition to net zero, we've explored installers' current thoughts and actions around upskilling in renewables in more detail. After all, the plumbing and heating industry plays a critical role in delivering energy-efficient, low-carbon solutions. However, realising this potential depends heavily on a workforce that is trained, confident and ready to install renewable technologies – and while progress is being made, the research shows there is still work to do.

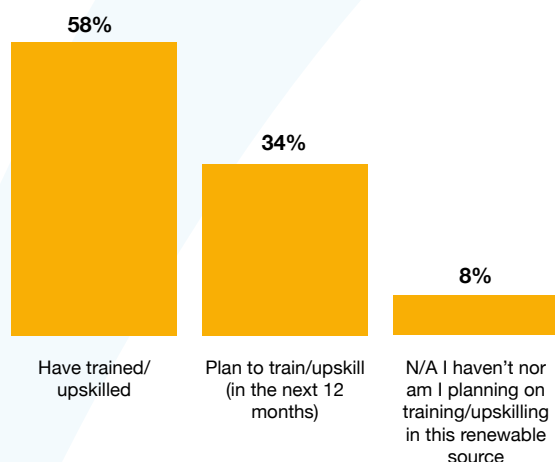
The most common area of renewables training among respondents is in heat pumps, with 58% having already trained and a further 34% planning to upskill in the next 12 months. Solar PV is gaining momentum, with 43% trained

and 44% planning to undertake training – a clear sign of growing interest and demand in this technology. Solar thermal and underfloor heating are also on the radar, with around 40-50% of installers either trained or planning to train soon.

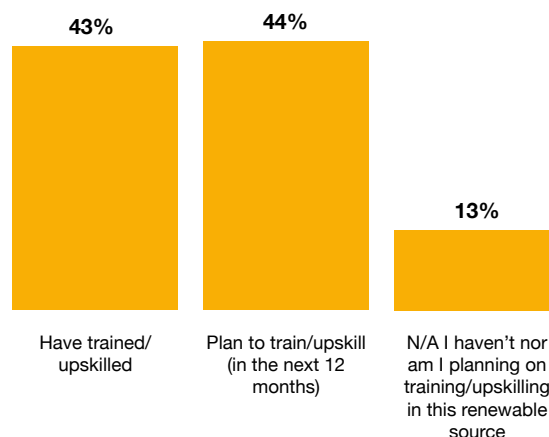
However, there are generational differences when it comes to uptake. Among those aged 55 and over, nearly one in three (31%) said they have not trained in solar PV, solar thermal or underfloor heating, and do not plan to. Those aged 25-34 are most likely to have trained in renewables, with 69% having upskilled in heat pumps, 46% in solar PV and 54% in underfloor heating.

Have you trained in any of the following renewable sources?

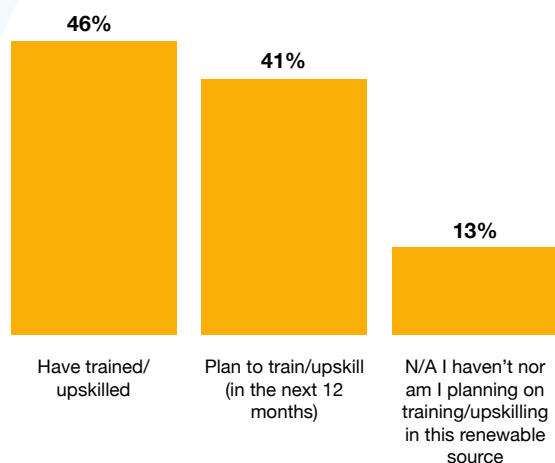
Heat pumps



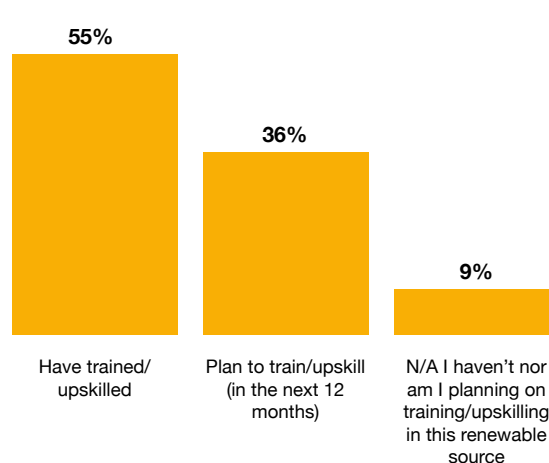
Solar PV



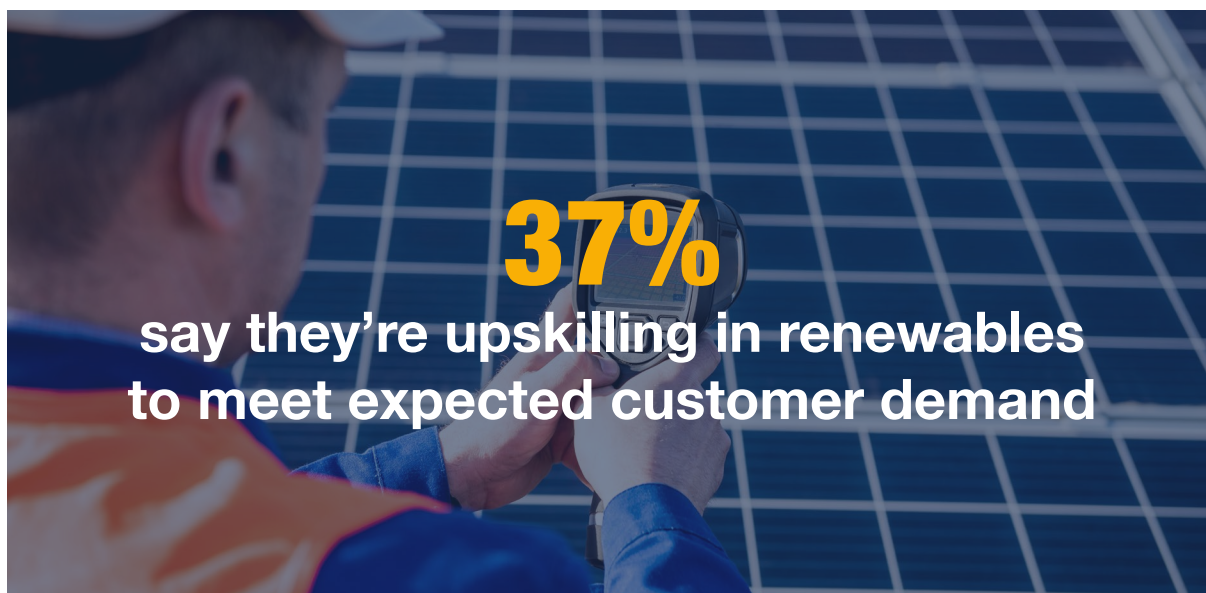
Solar thermal



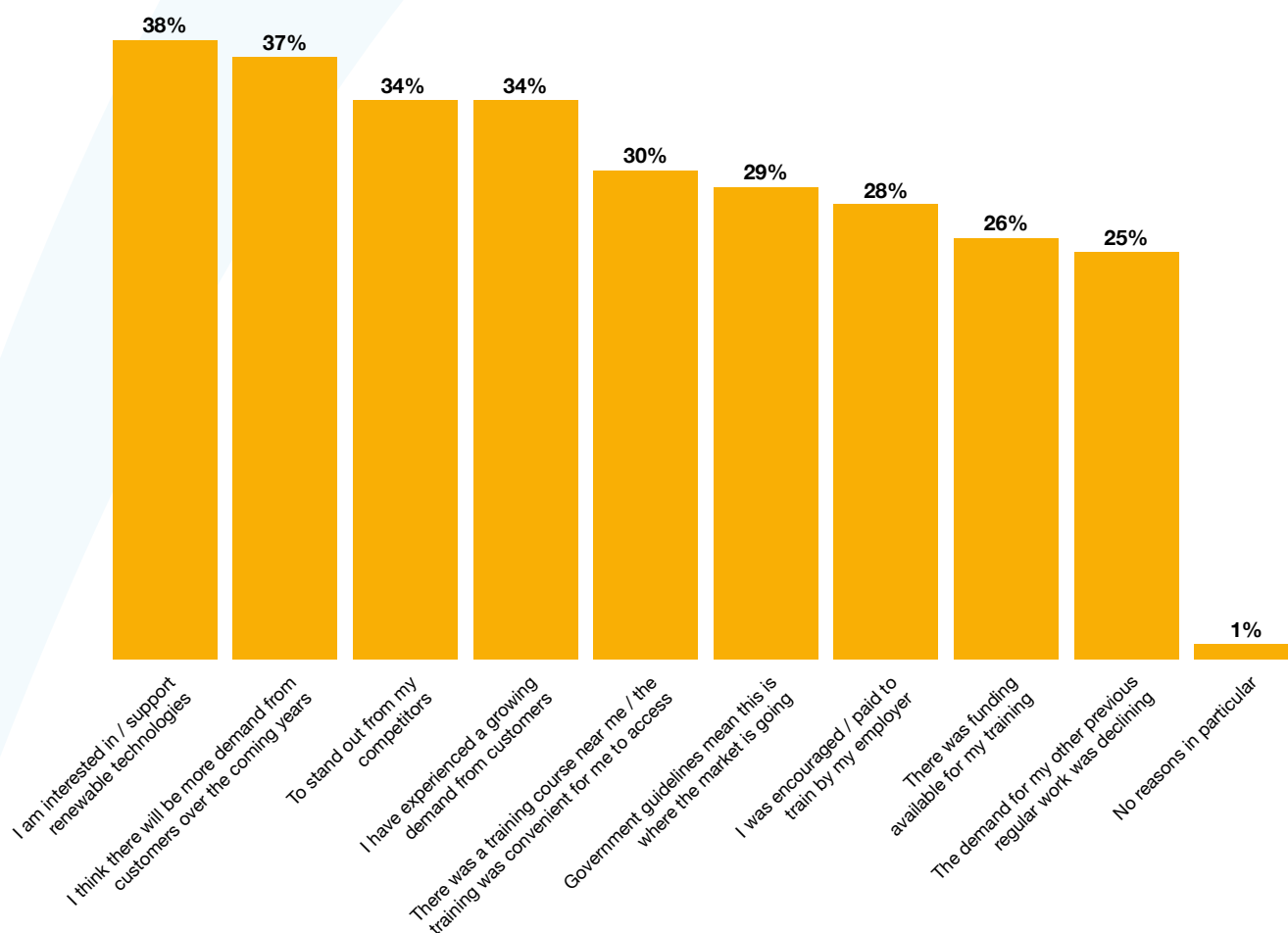
Underfloor heating



The motivations for pursuing renewable training are both market-driven and personal. The most common reasons include a genuine interest in the technology (38%), expected customer demand (37%) and the opportunity to gain a competitive advantage (34%). Convenience also plays a role with nearly a third (30%) saying local training facilities influenced their decision, as did changes in government guidelines and regulations (29%).



Why have you trained or planning to train in renewable sources?



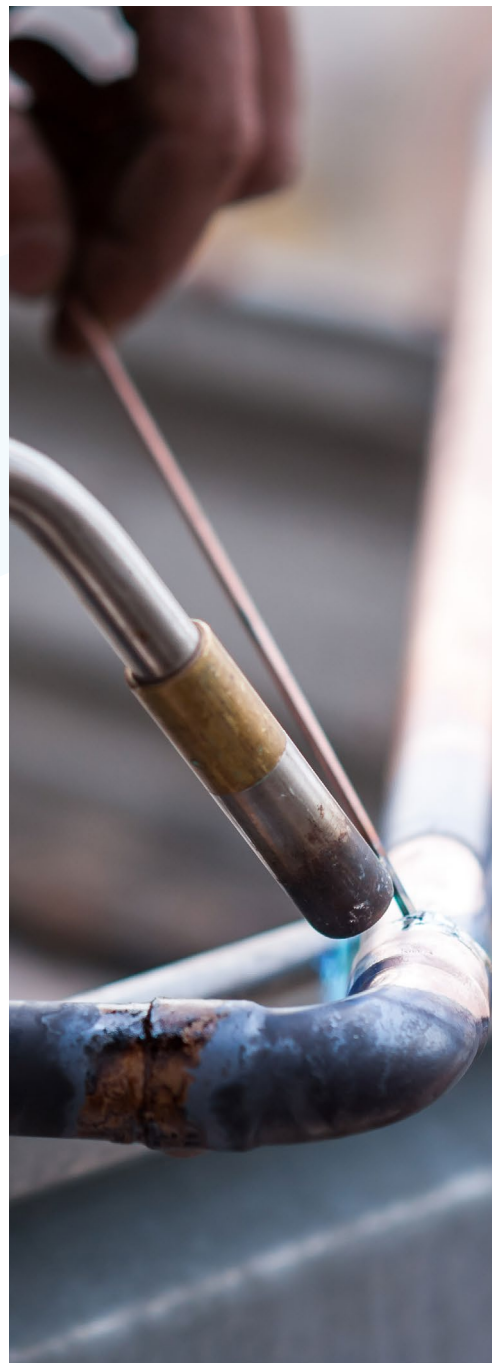
> Keeping on top of regulations

When it comes to regulatory knowledge, most professionals are confident in staying up to date with changes to Building Regulations. On average, 76% find it easy to keep on top of these updates. Trusted sources of information include industry bodies such as CIPHE (39%), the government website (38%), Local Authority Building Control (35%), manufacturer content (31%) and in branch at merchants (22%).

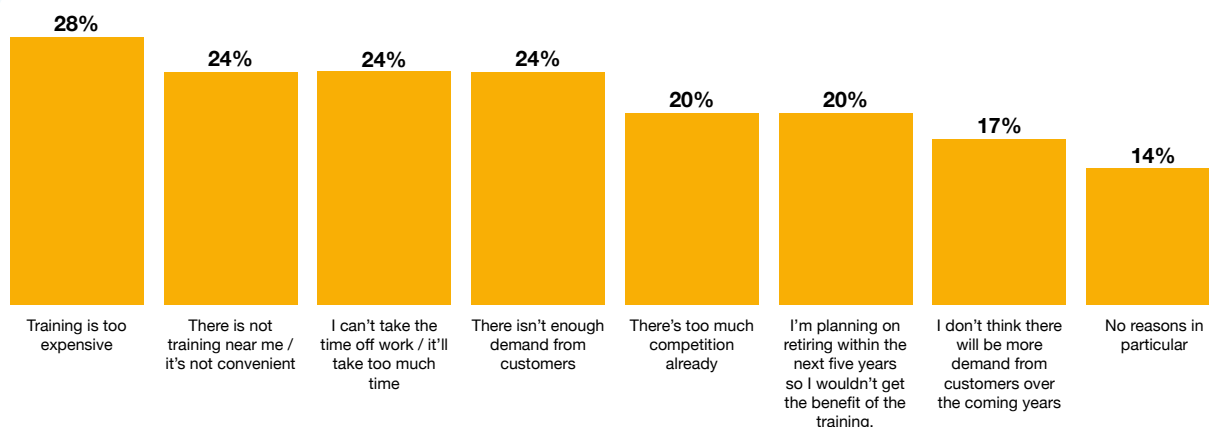
Despite the appetite for training, some industry professionals remain hesitant. Cost is a key concern, with 28% saying training is too expensive. Others cited a lack of nearby training facilities (24%), the challenge of taking time off work (24%) and uncertainty about customer demand (24%). For some, retirement is on the horizon and the incentive to retrain is low – 20% said they saw no perceived benefit at this stage in their career.

Installation of renewable systems often requires a blend of skills, for example electrical work in the case of heat pumps. Here, approaches vary with over a third (36%) saying they have a qualified electrician in the business to handle this part of the job, 31% are qualified themselves, and 30% subcontract the electrical part of the project. This highlights the growing need for multi-skilled professionals or collaborative working models to deliver complete solutions.

As interest in renewable technologies continues to rise, supporting access to affordable, flexible training will be crucial. Addressing these barriers now will not only help close the skills gap but also position the industry at the forefront of the UK's green transition.



If you haven't trained or don't plan to train in renewables, why not?





> Blocked time

Beyond repairs, maintenance and installations, the day-to-day reality for plumbers and heating installers involves a significant amount of time spent on non-billable, admin-heavy tasks. Our research shows that on average, plumbers and heating installers spend up to 30 hours a week on essential but time-consuming activities that keep their businesses running. That's the equivalent of a second full-time job.

One of the biggest time drains is sourcing and collecting the right products for different types of jobs. Installers spend an average of 3 hours 22 minutes a week sourcing for plumbing work, 3 hours 16 minutes for boiler jobs, and 3 hours 26 minutes for renewable heating installations. Time spent identifying faults and problems on maintenance and service jobs is similarly high, at 3 hours 26 minutes a week.

85% agree it's more important than ever to find a supplier who can source and distribute spares and other parts for heating repairs as quickly as possible – and it's even more for sole traders (88%)

Other major time commitments include preparing estimates and quotes (3 hours 16 minutes), communicating with customers (3 hours 26 minutes), and completing accountancy and financial admin (3 hours 17 minutes). Scheduling work, liaising with other tradespeople, and sourcing the best prices for products feature prominently in the weekly workload.

Marketing and business development also require attention. Plumbers and installers spend an average of 3 hours 15 minutes a week finding work and promoting their services, while a similar amount of time (3 hours 19 minutes) is spent sourcing the best product prices. However, sole traders and small businesses with 1-9 employees tend to spend less time on these tasks overall, as they juggle the demands of day-to-day work with limited time and resources. For instance, sole traders spend just over 2 hours on marketing and less than 2 hours on price sourcing each week.

> Dialling up digital tools

Despite hours being dedicated to different business and admin functions each week, there is a way to turn the tap on efficiency through digital tools. Our research found that while many in the industry are already making use of tech to streamline their work, there's still a portion of the market yet to make the switch.

Tools that help identify and source boiler parts are currently used by 60% of respondents, but a further 34% – including 41% of sole traders – said they would use them if they knew more about them. Similarly, 55% of plumbers and heating installers uses digital systems to build kits for solar or heat pump solutions, but uptake is much lower among sole traders (44%) and small businesses (47%), despite 41% of sole

traders saying they'd have a stronger interest if they knew more about the options.

Diagnostic tools are also making a difference, with 57% of respondents using digital solutions to help diagnose boiler or heating system issues.

60% currently use digital tools to help identify and source boiler parts

When it comes to managing accounts – a core responsibility for many small business owners – digital adoption is higher, especially among sole traders, 85% of whom already use tools for bookkeeping, payroll and invoicing.

Which digital tools do you currently use for your business?

Identify and find spares and parts for boilers

Yes, we currently use the tools for this	60%
No, we don't use tools for this but would consider implementing them in the future	34%
No, we don't use tools for this and wouldn't consider implementing them in the future	6%

Capitalise SEO

Yes, we currently use the tools for this	65%
No, we don't use tools for this but would consider implementing them in the future	30%
No, we don't use tools for this and wouldn't consider implementing them in the future	6%

Build systems and kits (e.g. Full solar solutions, full heat pump kits)

Yes, we currently use the tools for this	55%
No, we don't use tools for this but would consider implementing them in the future	38%
No, we don't use tools for this and wouldn't consider implementing them in the future	6%

Diagnose problems with boilers or other heating systems

Yes, we currently use the tools for this	57%
No, we don't use tools for this but would consider implementing them in the future	36%
No, we don't use tools for this and wouldn't consider implementing them in the future	7%

Project management (e.g. Tasks, appointments, jobs, resource allocation)

Yes, we currently use the tools for this	60%
No, we don't use tools for this but would consider implementing them in the future	33%
No, we don't use tools for this and wouldn't consider implementing them in the future	7%

Communicate with my customers or employees

Yes, we currently use the tools for this	64%
No, we don't use tools for this but would consider implementing them in the future	29%
No, we don't use tools for this and wouldn't consider implementing them in the future	7%

Manage accounts (bookkeeping, invoicing, payroll, tax)

Yes, we currently use the tools for this	68%
No, we don't use tools for this but would consider implementing them in the future	27%
No, we don't use tools for this and wouldn't consider implementing them in the future	5%

HR and employee/contractor management (e.g. Recruiting, hiring, contracts, resource allocation)

Yes, we currently use the tools for this	58%
No, we don't use tools for this but would consider implementing them in the future	31%
No, we don't use tools for this and wouldn't consider implementing them in the future	11%

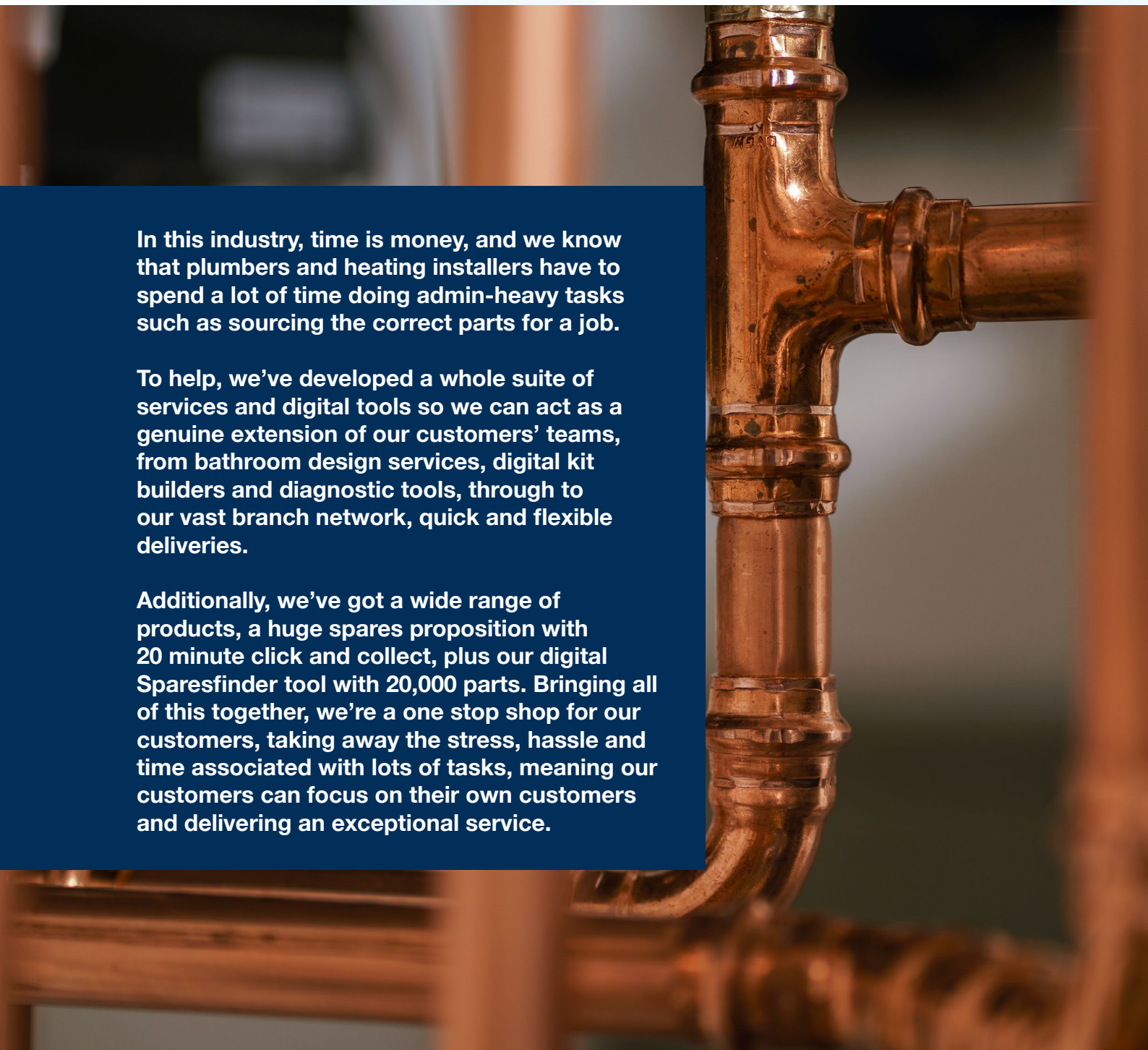
Training and development (e.g. Tracking training, online training)

Yes, we currently use the tools for this	55%
No, we don't use tools for this but would consider implementing them in the future	37%
No, we don't use tools for this and wouldn't consider implementing them in the future	8%

In this industry, time is money, and we know that plumbers and heating installers have to spend a lot of time doing admin-heavy tasks such as sourcing the correct parts for a job.

To help, we've developed a whole suite of services and digital tools so we can act as a genuine extension of our customers' teams, from bathroom design services, digital kit builders and diagnostic tools, through to our vast branch network, quick and flexible deliveries.

Additionally, we've got a wide range of products, a huge spares proposition with 20 minute click and collect, plus our digital Sparesfinder tool with 20,000 parts. Bringing all of this together, we're a one stop shop for our customers, taking away the stress, hassle and time associated with lots of tasks, meaning our customers can focus on their own customers and delivering an exceptional service.





> A quick guide to City Plumbing's digital tools

Services at City Plumbing



Boiler Pack Builder: Custom-build your boiler pack for installation in a residential or commercial property.



Solar PV Kit Builder: Easily select and combine the correct components for your complete solar PV kit.



Air Source Heat Pump Kit Builder: Find the products for your next ASHP installation.



Underfloor Heating Kit Builder: Plan the best underfloor heating kit for any type of project or building.



FaultFinder: Quickly and accurately diagnose boiler faults, get quick advice and solutions.

> Bathrooms, budgets and better designs

Bathroom work remains a strong and diverse area within the industry, with respondents reporting a robust mix of renovation and repair jobs. Over a third (35%) say they are seeing more demand for full bathroom renovations and new installations, compared to a quarter (25%) who say they're doing more repairs. Meanwhile, 34% are balancing both equally – highlighting a steady and varied pipeline of bathroom-related work across the UK.

35% say they're seeing more demand for full bathroom renovations and new installations, rather than repairs

For those focusing more on renovations and installations, shifting customer priorities appear to be driving demand. The top reason, cited by 42% of respondents, is that customers want to change the function of their bathrooms, such as replacing a bath with a shower to suit changing mobility needs or lifestyle preferences. Another key factor is that many homeowners are choosing to renovate rather than relocate. With the property market remaining challenging, 35% of installers say their customers are investing in existing bathrooms instead of moving house.

A further 34% say customers who have recently moved into new homes are keen to upgrade their bathrooms to match their style and preferences. In some cases, installers report less competition locally for bathroom renovations (31%), making this work both appealing and profitable. Additionally, 30% note that customers are driven by aesthetics and simply want a more modern, refreshed look. On the other hand, a smaller, but still significant, group of professionals are seeing more demand for bathroom repairs. For 37% of these installers, environmentally conscious customers are a key factor. Rather than ripping out and replacing a bathroom, people are opting to repair or refurbish existing features to reduce waste. Affordability is also influencing behaviour, with 35% saying repairs are popular among customers wanting to keep costs down.

Interestingly, preference in the type of work professionals opt for plays a role too, with 29% of respondents saying they personally prefer repair work over full installations, while others note that they face less local competition for repair jobs (28%). In some cases, customers are happy with their current layout and design, but want everything to work well and look clean and refreshed.





> The full bathroom offering

This split in customer priorities – between style and function, and renovation and repair – presents an opportunity for tradespeople depending on the demand in their local area and their preference for work. Whether our customers are helping homeowners to design and install their dream bathroom or fix and make the best of what they currently already have, we have a whole range of products and services to help. We offer a full bathroom design service and following our recent investment to refurbish 290 branches across the UK, our customers can bring their own customers to see the products and options for themselves. Our newly revamped brochures and collection also offer a huge choice of products, from affordable, good quality options through to more premium, design-led finishes. Additionally, our exclusive iflo brand is only available through City Plumbing and The Bathroom Showroom. Offering a complete range of bathroom solutions and styles, from traditional to contemporary, iflo is suitable for even the most demanding of projects.

> A balancing act

Maintaining a healthy work-life balance remains a challenge across the plumbing and heating industry, especially for those running smaller businesses. While 74% of plumbers and heating installers overall say they have enough time off throughout the year to look after their mental and physical health, this figure dips to 68% for those in businesses with 1-9 employees. This may reflect the pressures of managing a team while still being heavily involved in day-to-day operations. Sole traders and those in slightly larger businesses (10-49 employees) report slightly better balance, with 74% and 72% respectively saying they are happy with how much time off they have.

Despite this sense of having 'enough' time off, the reality of annual leave paints a different picture. On average, plumbers and heating installers took just 15 and a quarter days off in the past year – well below the Government's statutory minimum paid holiday entitlement of 28 days. Sole traders took the least, with just 13 and a half days on average, highlighting the difficulty of stepping away from the business when you're the only one keeping it running.

When it comes to how that time off is spent, it's clear that family, relaxation and leisure are the top priorities. The most popular ways to unwind include spending time with family (46%), taking holidays (42%), watching films (38%), and socialising with friends (37%). Others turn to exercise (32%), hobbies (30%), and home improvement projects (29%). Some also seek cultural and community engagement, with 25% attending gigs or festivals, 18% spending time reading, and 14% volunteering.

While most respondents feel their work supports their wellbeing, the data suggests a more complex picture, particularly for smaller operators. Across all respondents, 72% say their job has a positive impact on their mental health, but this drops to just 62% for sole traders and 59% for businesses with 1-9 employees. The trend is similar for physical health, with 71% overall feeling their job benefits them physically – however only 53% of sole traders and 61% of those in businesses with 1-9 employees agree.



**Last year, plumbers
and heating installers
took off just 15 and
a quarter days on
holiday**

WELCOME

> Reward yourself

We know how hard our customers work all year and many don't take enough time off. Our industry-leading My City Plumbing Rewards recognises and rewards tradespeople for every purchase they make, with no minimum spend required to start earning points. The programme offers a wide range of rewards, from TVs and holidays to smartwatches and gift vouchers from leading retailers, as well as the option to use points as credit against a City Plumbing account. We've also recently added the opportunity to redeem points on exclusive, personalised experiences, such as tickets to top sporting events like the Six Nations and Premier League, concerts like Abba Voyage, festival passes and spa breaks. It's our way of thanking our customers and encouraging them to take time away from their work doing something that they'll enjoy.

OPENING HOURS

Mon	7:30am to 5:00pm
Tue	7:30am to 5:00pm
Wed	7:30am to 5:00pm
Thur	7:30am to 5:00pm
Fri	7:30am to 5:00pm
Sat	8:00am to 12:00noon
Su	Closed

NEW
*** INTRODUCING ***
my CITY PLUMBING
REWARDS
EARN
POINTS,
GET
REWARDED
TECs apply

YOU NEED IT.
WE STOCK IT.
GOT IT.
ON IT.

Over 2000 best selling
products, always in stock
at every branch!

CITY



> Skills, support and a sustainable future

Our first Taking the Temperature report reveals a resilient and resourceful plumbing and heating industry – one that is not only weathering the pressures of a changing landscape, but actively embracing new opportunities for growth.

From a strong demand for services and high levels of collaboration, to a growing appetite for renewable technologies and digital tools, the sector is clearly evolving. But alongside this optimism, there are real challenges that must be addressed to future-proof the industry.

The skills shortage, in particular, represents both a risk and an opportunity. With many professionals open to training and upskilling, especially in areas like heat pumps and solar PV, the groundwork has already been laid. What's needed now is greater investment, more accessible training and practical support for both new entrants and experienced tradespeople alike.

Sole traders and small businesses, who make up a significant portion of the workforce, need targeted solutions that help ease the pressure of admin, improve work-life balance and make it easier to take on apprentices. At the same time, continued collaboration between suppliers, training providers and industry bodies will be key to realising the full potential of the sector.

As we look ahead to a lower-carbon, more digitally enabled future, the plumbing and heating industry has a vital role to play. At City Plumbing, we're proud to play our part by offering the right support, services, digital tools and recognition, to help the workforce deliver essential services and lead the UK's transition to a more sustainable future.

With 360 branches nationwide and 292 bathroom showrooms, there is a City Plumbing branch near you that can support with all projects, no matter the size or complexity. Visit cityplumbing.co.uk to find your closest branch, order via Click & Collect and try our time-saving digital tools.



cityplumbing.co.uk