



THE CAMPAIGN FOR
ACCOUNTABLE
SKILLED TRADES

CAST Survey Report of the Impact of Rogue Skilled Trades on their Victims

March 2025

OVERVIEW

1. About CAST
2. The Survey's Purpose
3. Results
 - a. Summary
 - b. Deposits & VAT
 - c. How the Tradesperson was found
 - d. Government Agencies & Other Support
 - e. Private Legal cases
4. Recommendations
5. CAST's Commitment
6. Contact



ABOUT CAST

CAST (Campaign for Accountable Skilled Trades) is the only national, independent campaign fighting for change in the domestic building industry.

We are a group made of victims who are willing to share their stories and provide emotional support to others that are being / have been impacted by rogue traders.

We can prove that the systems in place for redress are not fit for purpose for the domestic construction customer, typically leaving people in dire financial straits and often living in a building site for many years.

We can prove that domestic customers face inconsistent standards, lack oversight, and have limited pathways for successful redress.

We believe all skilled tradespeople should operate with trust, transparency, and accountability - and that the industry should be regulated and licensed.

We have it on good authority that rogue traders are on the increase and we believe that the government and associated bodies need to acknowledge this.

CAST is an independent and free resource for everyone, CAST advocates for clear standards, proper accreditation, and a regulatory framework that provides real protection to members of the public.

CAST collaborates with industry leaders, policymakers and the public to push for stronger accountability and an effective redress system.

We encourage victims to share their experiences with us, strengthening our call for reform and enabling them to find support and understanding.

CAST also is working to prevent people falling victim through providing experience based guidance on how to navigate domestic construction & maintenance work, and what to do, and not do, should things go wrong.

THE SURVEY PURPOSE

The Survey asks victims to share their data.

The survey was piloted for 5 months in 2024. It is covered by GDPR and we also do not share any identifying characteristics. We only share data results in formal reports like this one.

The data proved victims were happy to share their details including the financial impact they have had to endure. That survey showed 72 victims reporting a loss of £4.13M and that Rogues were operating across the country.

CAST took the opportunity to invest in a formal survey with more specific questions so we could understand the total loss as well as how the tradesperson was found, the type of work they were hired for and whether checks were carried out.

This Survey Report covers January 2025 to March 2025. The specific report has been compiled to provide data in support of the Domestic Building Regulation Bill's second reading on March 23rd 2025.

RESULTS SUMMARY

Survey Duration **January 2025 - March 2025**
Respondents **72**

Estimated Project Cost total £5.9 Million

Total paid to Tradesperson £4.6 Million

Estimates to rectify / complete the work £4.7 Million

This demonstrates that the costs of rectifying or finishing work that has been abandoned or poorly constructed by rogue traders can cost as much as has been paid out in the first place. It is only the wealthy that can afford to absorb costs of this level.

The retired and vulnerable have little opportunity to pay for additional funds to rectify the work. Working families are often forced to take out additional finance putting exceptional strain on affordability, relationships and mental health.

It leaves people with risk of increased debts when having to incorporate increases in the cost of living and taxes; it also increases anxiety of risk of job losses.

Estimated VAT Fraud £593,000

Estimated Income Tax Avoidance/evasion Unknown

Total lost to builders found on Trader websites £1,06 Million
 (CheckATrade and Federation of Master Builders have largest losses)

Trading Standards cases that were taken up & won 1 of 72
 That are awaiting to hear about charges 11 of 72

Respondents who went to Small Claims
 and who won a CCJ 14 of 72
 And who received the monies awarded 2 of 14

The Campaign for Accountable Skilled Trades (CAST) can prove, and as our numbers grow will continue to prove that the current system is not fit for purpose, that an overhaul is needed and that the system protects the criminals over the victims.

RESULTS

Deposits

Deposits paid by BACS	£782,000
Number of tradespeople asking for a deposit:	85% (61 people)
Of which were BACS transfers	98.6% (71 people)

BACS payments for agreed services to be delivered (verbal or written contract) have no protection under Consumer Rights laws.

We have verbatim responses stating the majority of deposits (and later payments) were made into personal accounts or pressured for in cash.

VAT

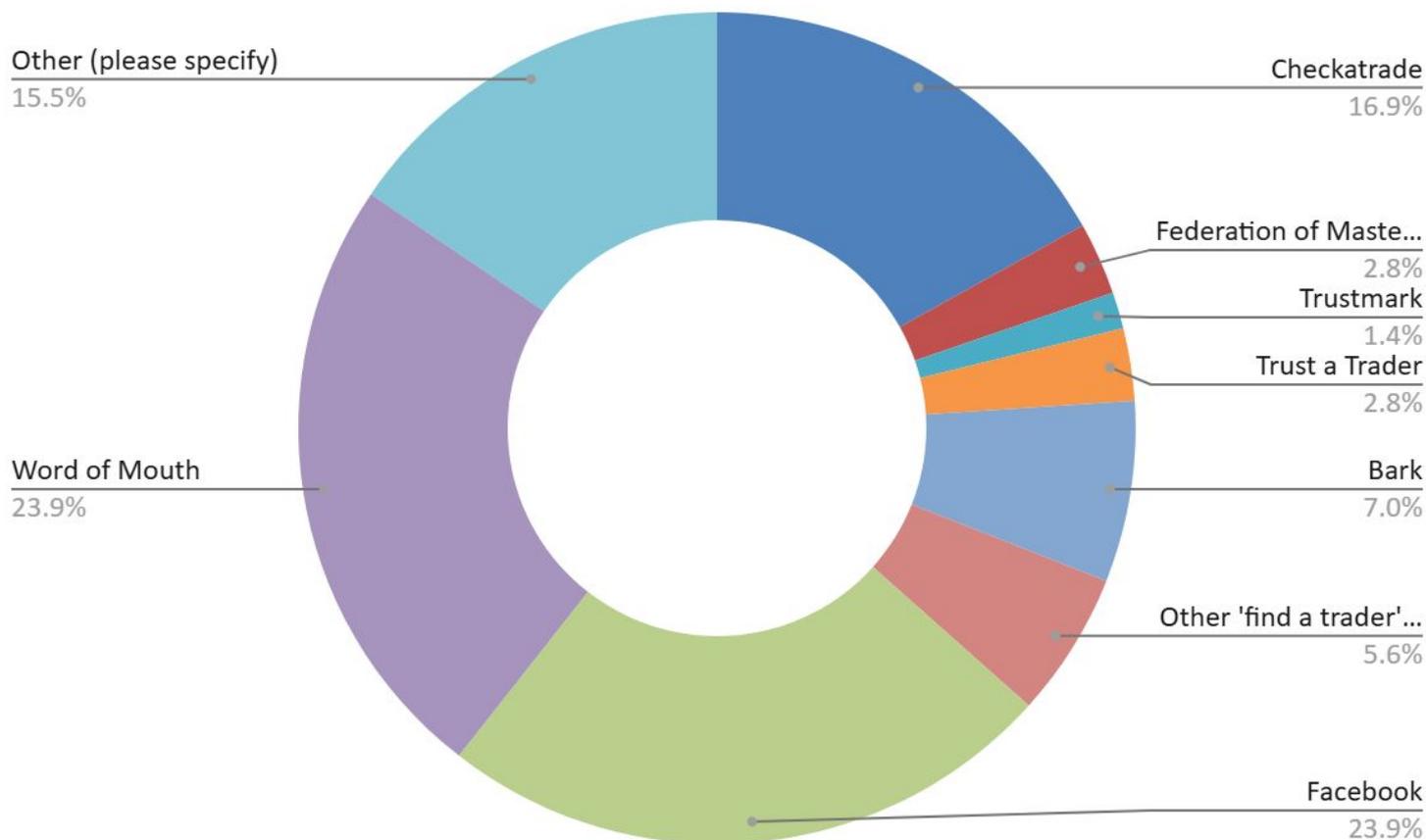
Number of tradespeople charging VAT	26% (19 people)
But without a VAT Number/Unregistered	14% (10 people)

Assuming VAT was charged at 20%, received into a personal bank account, and not paid forward to HMRC, this would be a £593,160 that is owed to HMRC.

While we cannot prove if income taxes have been paid it is a fair assumption that there are additional monies owed to the nation as a result, impacting everyone.

RESULTS

How the Tradesperson was found.



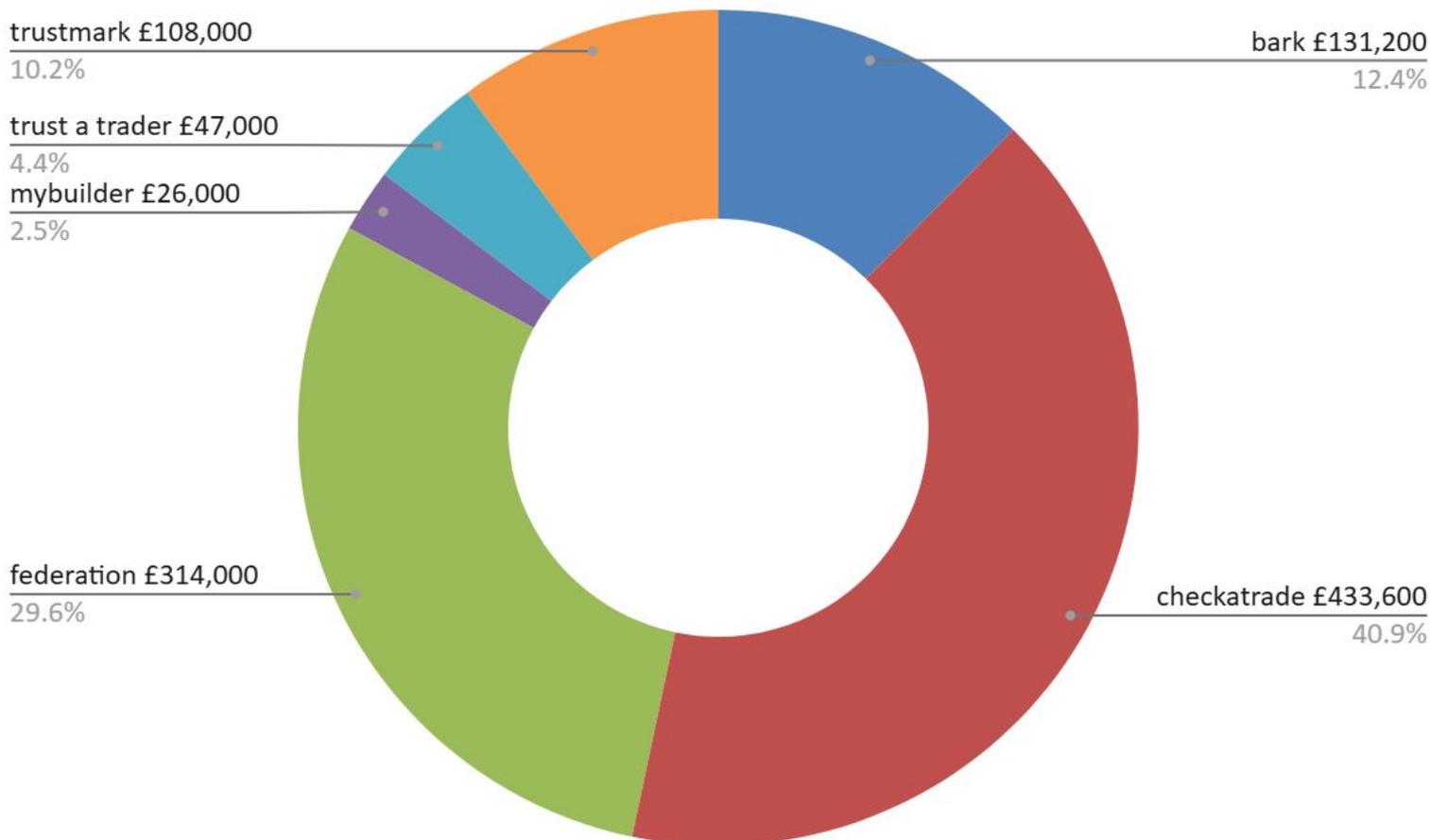
One of the most common pieces of advice given by Trading Standards and Consumer Rights bodies is to find someone through word of mouth. This chart proves that recommendation is obsolete as it is in joint place for finding a rogue along with social media. We have anecdotal comments reporting recommendations from neighbours, family friends and even appointed architects.

This data also shows that the rise of social media has changed behaviours to asking people online for recommendations so additional caution is needed here - though CAST can demonstrate that the majority of people that respond are tradespeople themselves.

RESULTS

How the Tradesperson was found (cont).

We separated out the data for all trade finder sites to share more detail.



While CheckaTrade have recently been in the news for removing negative feedback, their guarantee is only £1000, a tiny sum given the reported £1.06 Million in deposits given to rogue traders found on these sites.

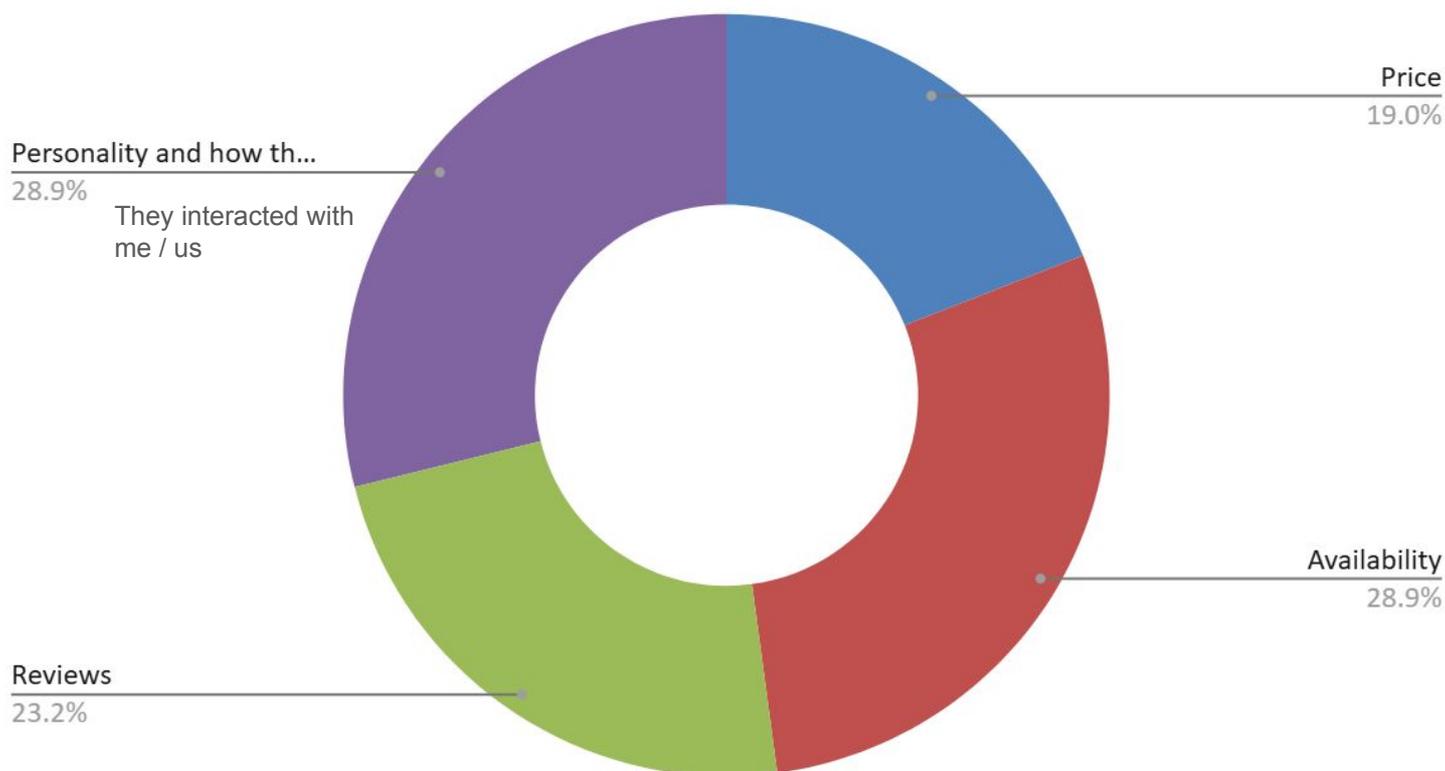
Note that the Federation of Master Builders is noted here, and we are aware they are working with government and supporting the Domestic Building Regulations Bill; this is also why the Campaign for Accountable Skilled Trades is and will remain, independent.

CAST believes that **any** organisation that takes a fee from a tradesperson in order to 'recommend' them to domestic customers has a business model based on a conflict of interest. There is no incentive for those organisations to conduct proper checks routinely and consistently on every tradesperson that pays to receive 'leads'. CAST suggests that their primary focus is the tradesperson as they are the ones that provide the income.

RESULTS

How the Tradesperson was found (cont).

Responses



Domestic building customers are repeatedly told the same advice:

- Don't go with the cheapest
- Don't go with the most readily available
- Check reviews
- Go with word of mouth.

Word of mouth is covered in the previous page.

This chart demonstrates respondents based the majority of their decisions on whom to appoint based on personal interaction and availability.

It is clear the traditional advice is obsolete and needs updating.

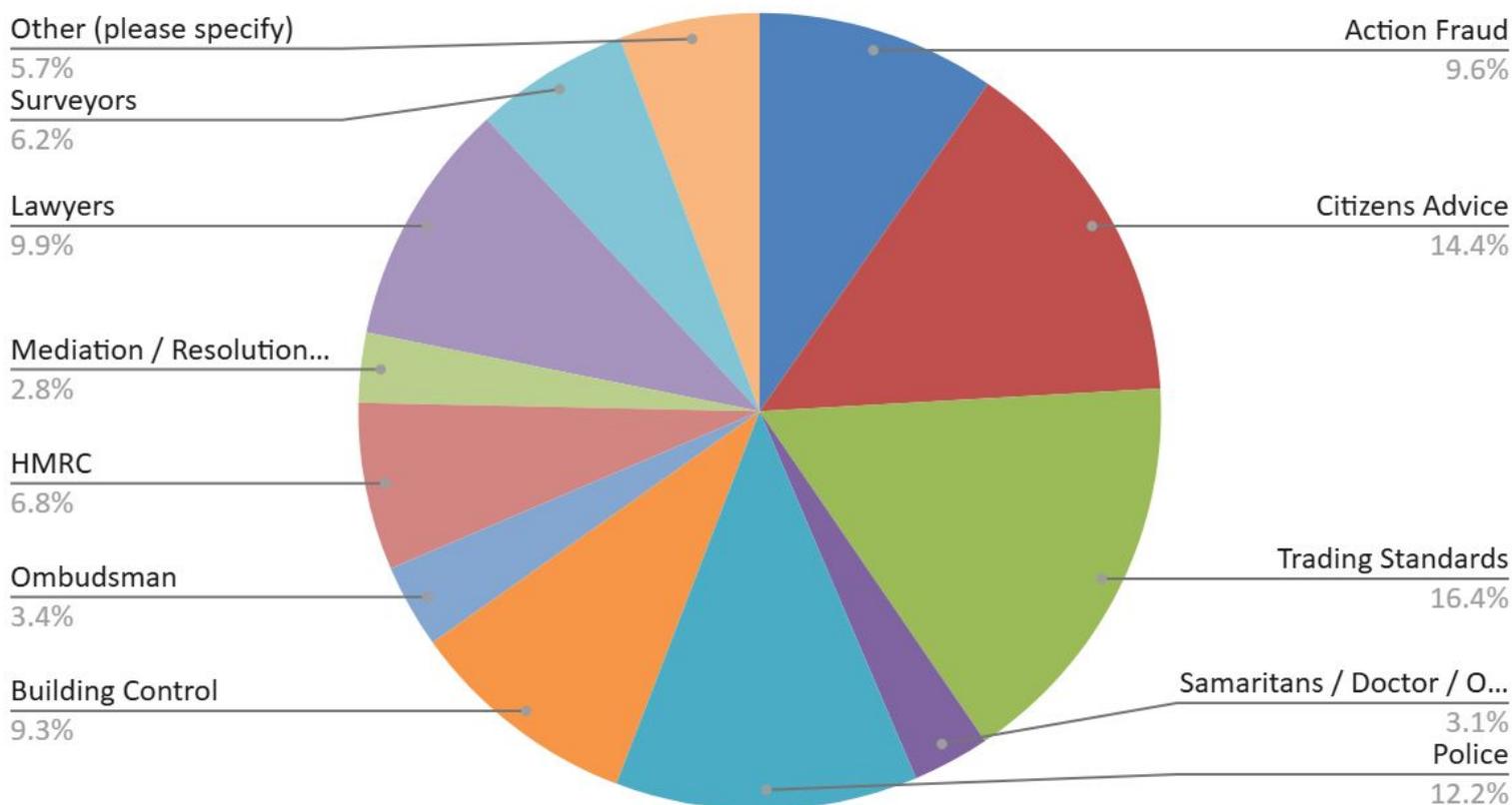
RESULTS

Government Agencies and Other Support

We asked victims who they contacted when they realised that things were going wrong.

We wanted to know if people understood what to do, whom to contact in order to obtain redress - or even navigate closing down a contract so the tradesperson could not come back to their home.

Responses



For the significant majority of the UK, Trading Standards can only be accessed through Citizens Advice. We understand this is not universal and it is not clear which Trading Standards teams in the UK require victims to contact them. CAST will be looking into this to ensure the public receive greater support and transparency.

It is worth noting that the third largest percentage of contact is to the police. We do not have data on whether this is due to being threatened or to seek help obtaining redress. As breaches of domestic contracts are deemed civil, not criminal, the police is a dead end.

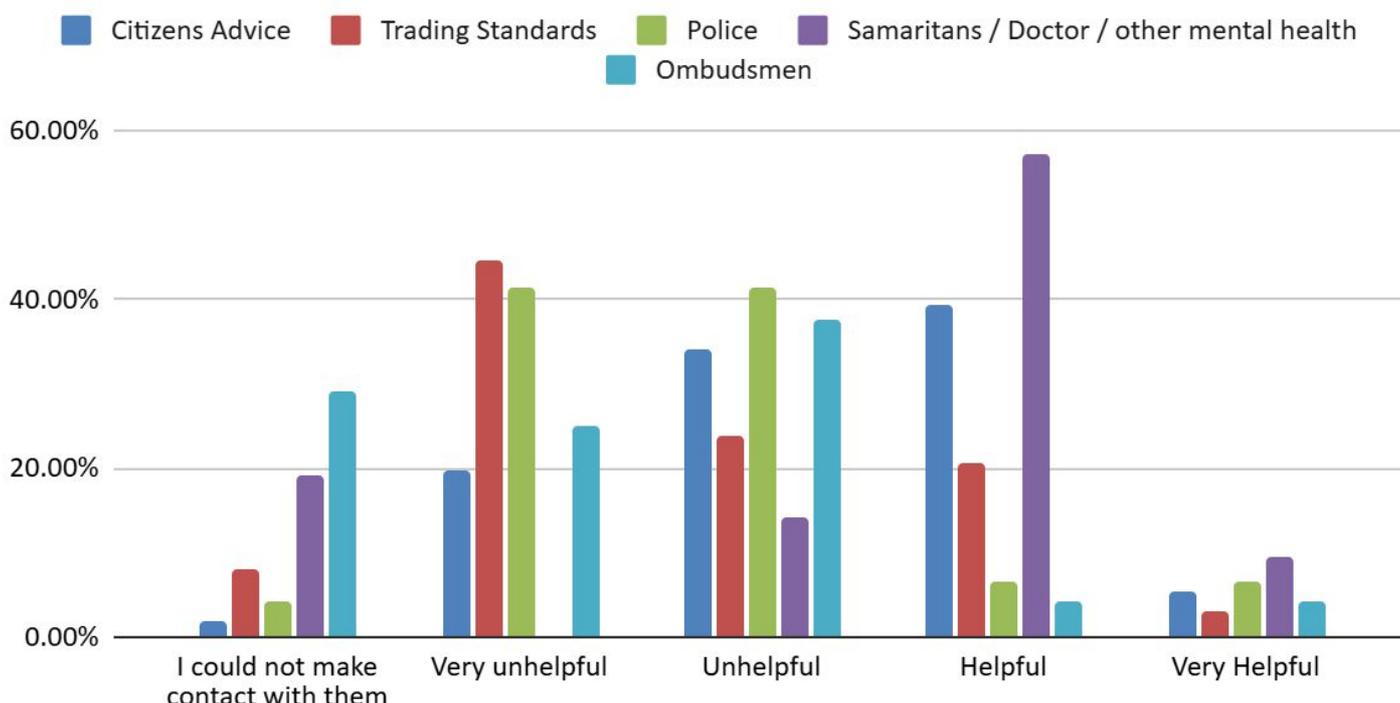
RESULTS

Government Agencies and Other Support (cont)

Once things had gone wrong, we asked people who they contacted.

We wanted to know if people understood what to do, whom to contact in order to obtain redress - or even navigate closing down a contract so the tradesperson could not come back to their home.

Citizens Advice, Trading Standards, Police, Samaritans / Doctor / other mental health and Ombudsmen



Respondents report long waits to contact Citizens Advice (CA) in order to access Trading Standards (TS). Respondents share the advice they have been given with us, and other members of CAST on our Facebook Group. There are numerous reports of inconsistent advice and advice that does not align with CA's own Consumer Advice website.

Most respondents report very low levels of TS contact or take up of their case. CAST regularly school victims on how to optimise their case with TS*. TS's take up is abysmally low and anecdotally grossly inconsistent across the country.

Most respondents have had issues having their case taken seriously or acted upon by trading Standards. See next page for details.

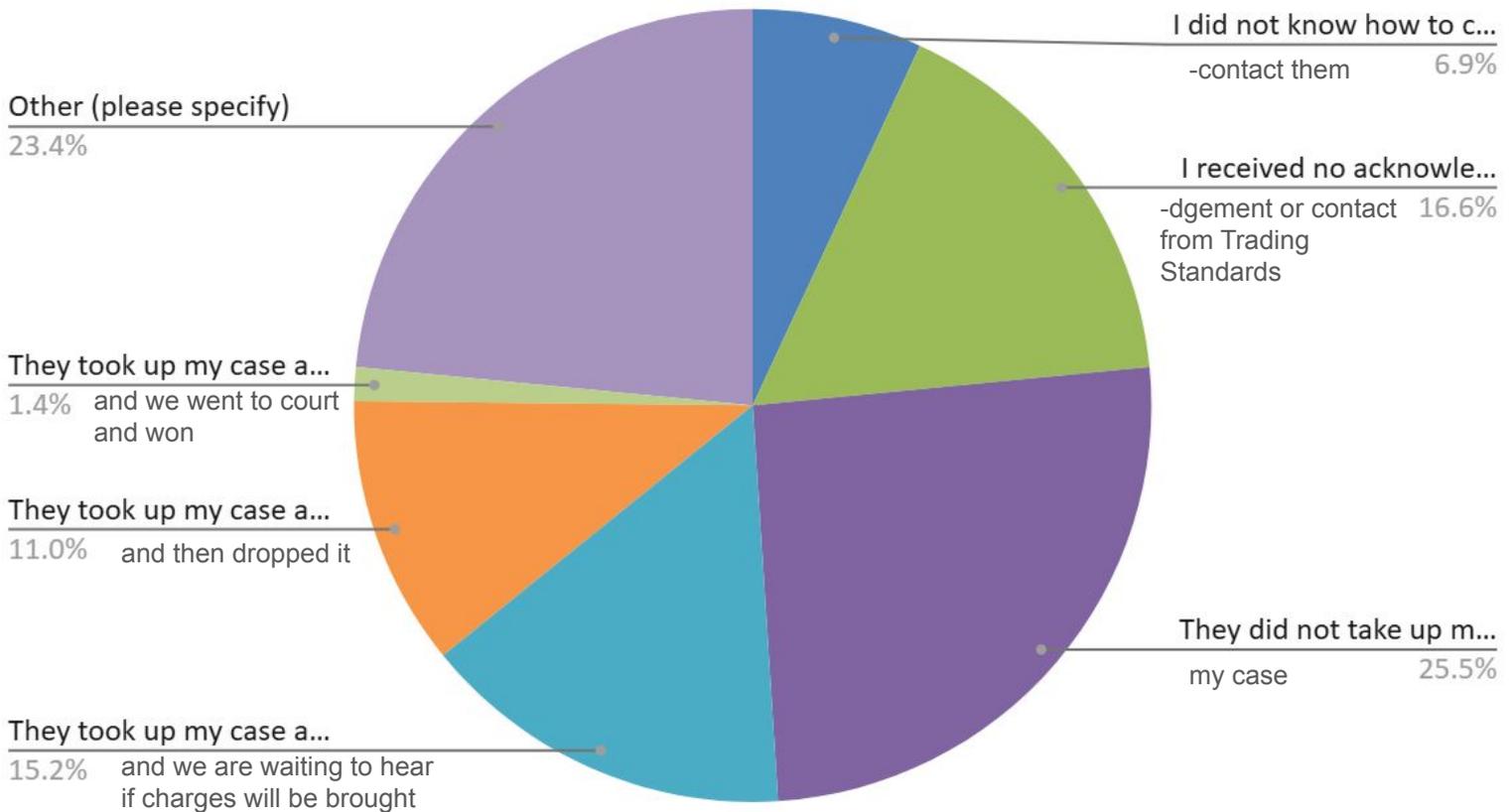
*Get a group of 5-6 victims of the same tradesperson to log their complaint on the same day,

RESULTS

Government Agencies and Other Support (cont)

We asked victims of their experience with Trading Standards.

Responses



The majority of 'Other' responses are verbatims on being told it was a waste of time, of other victims advising not to bother as they had not had any contact, right up to having to involve their MPs for support and repeated push back citing a victim's situation was a 'civil matter'.

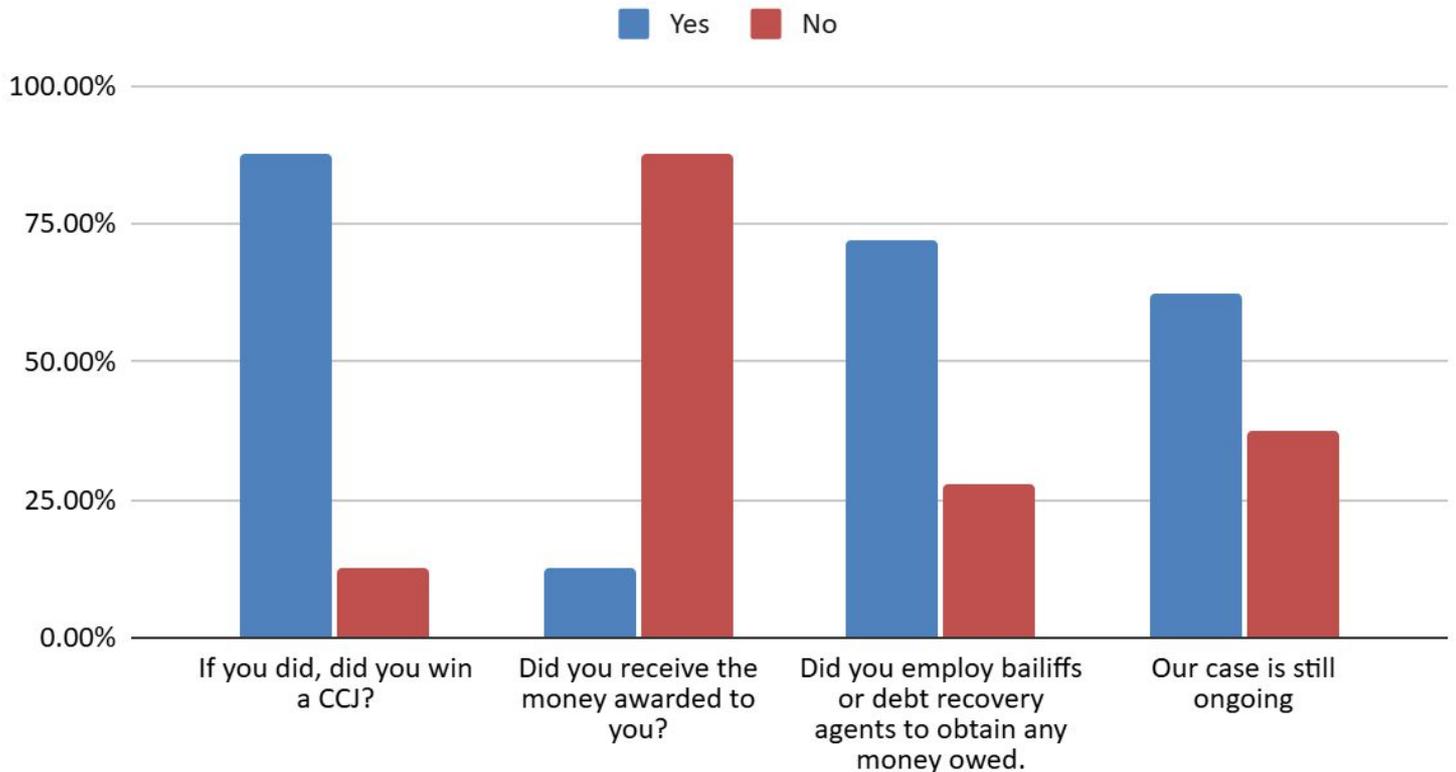
It is clear that Trading Standards are underfunded, under resourced and overwhelmed. They are currently not fit for purpose, need more funding and it would appear, a significant overhaul.

RESULTS

Private Legal Cases

We asked victims of their experience with Small Claims process and reclaiming monies awarded to them.

Yes and No



Clearly, where victims have been able to progress with small claims and won their case, the process is not over. Getting their awarded monies is also an uphill battle where the responsibility lies with the victim to pursue, at their own expense, that which they have been awarded by court.

Of 25 responses where victims chose not to go down this route:

- 25 people were advised not to proceed by lawyers as it would cost more than the moneys already lost.
- 3 people's attempts ended when the tradesperson refused to engage or shut down their business - before starting up a new one.
- 2 people reported giving up on obtaining moneys due to being threatened by the tradesperson, and one settled out of court for the same reason.

RECOMMENDATIONS

So what do we feel is the solution? There are some quick wins you, our elected leaders, can carry out and some longer term change that you can raise awareness and lobby for.

Quick Wins

Show Up & Support The Bill

Turn up and support the [Domestic Building Works \(Consumer Protection\) Bill](#).

The second reading is on Friday March 28th 2025.

Put aside political party differences. ALL voters can be conned by rogue traders. ALL voters can be tricked into parting with their money and taking on potentially unaffordable debt to put their lives back together. ALL voters have to deal with crushing mental health issues because of this.

Use Your Influence

Spread the word with other politicians, colleagues and industry leaders.

Share this report and our website

www.castcampaign.co.uk

If constituents come to you with issues about rogue traders, if you can, refer them to CAST. We can offer support, assure people they are not alone, they they are not 'stupid'. We can also help them navigate what they are going through.

Escrow

A major issue is that traders ask for deposits, and since victims often choose traders based on their approach, it's clear that rogue traders are skilled scammers.

Traders want deposits to secure jobs and avoid losses from unreliable customers.

We must find a way to make deposit payments **safer and fairer** for both sides.

While escrow services are private, government support could boost trust, increase adoption, and make them a standard practice across the UK.

Collaboration!

Government funded departments **MUST** collaborate together! Each department should have KPIs on collaboration, cooperation, information sharing and transparency between each department. This is limited to zero cost impact requiring an instruction and staff understanding that their work does not stand alone.

Collaboration failures reported to CAST:

- Devon Trading Standards were held up in their criminal investigation of a rogue trader because Devon Building Control refused to share a report with them.
- A prolific rogue trader operates across multiple local authorities. No local authority would have a conversation about the case citing it was not their responsibility, despite a number of cases being within their jurisdiction.

RECOMMENDATIONS

So what do we feel is the solution? There are some quick wins you, our elected leaders, can carry out and some longer term change that you can raise awareness and lobby for.

Lobby for Change

Trading Standards

Trading Standards teams are struggling—budget cuts and staff losses have left them overwhelmed. Our data confirms what’s clear: they need more funding to tackle rising fraud.

Without urgent action, an already stretched service will become completely unfit for purpose. Fraud will thrive, and the public will pay the price.

It’s time to invest in real consumer protection.

Police Laws

Hiring a tradesperson comes with a simple expectation: leave my home better than you found it.

If they drove into your house or smashed your property, it would be a crime. Yet, leaving your home unsafe or in disrepair after being paid isn't treated the same way.

This must change. The law should be accessible for everyone, not just the wealthy and corporations.

CCJ Recovery

Rogue traders can keep trading while victims struggle to rebuild their lives. Even when a victim wins a private case and gets a CCJ, enforcing payment is nearly impossible.

We need a legal change: CCJs from private cases should fall under the Proceeds of Crime Act, allowing court-appointed bailiffs to recover what victims are owed.

Justice must be enforceable without further cost to the victim.

Licensing

Nearly every Western country has a licensing scheme for builders. Electricians and gas can kill, so those trades are licensed. In Scotland, window cleaners are licensed as a pattern was identified between window cleaning routes and home burglaries.

In the UK, builders deal with construction risks that can kill if completed incorrectly. Improved Building Control Measures will make the good better - but will not make the bad improve. The bad do not care. They do not care because they know the system victims are given to work with is toothless, that they can intimidate people into leaving them alone, that they do not need to pay any CCJs claiming they have no assets - and that they can carry on as they have before with little to no repercussions.

We need a national database of competent and approved builders where customers can be confident the person they hire is good, the same as for Building Control, Architects, Electricians and Gas Engineers. If it is possible for all these bodies, please tell us why it is not possible for builders?

CAST'S COMMITMENTS

Prevention

Our website now offers a complete, free framework to help the public navigate the construction industry including a list of proper checks and how to use social media appropriately to find a trade.

Built with expert insights and real-world experience, it brings together scattered advice into one easy-to-use resource.

We're also developing a '**resolution**' section to guide people on what to do (and not do) if things go wrong.

Gather Data

CAST is gathering data to show how everyday people suffer from a system that fails to protect them. We need political support to drive real change.

Most Western countries have builder regulations—Scotland even requires window cleaners to be licensed. The UK is falling behind.

It's time to catch up and protect the public. Change is overdue.

Contact Us

Website:

www.castcampaign.co.uk

Facebook:

[CAST Campaign For Accountable Skilled Trades](#)

Email:

info@castcampaign.co.uk