Arcavia Consulting

CAREER ANALYSIS · CONSTRUCTION

The route to managing director

244 careers at the top of UK contracting, and the pattern they share.

How long it takes to reach the board and then the MD's chair, what people studied, where they started, and whether they were promoted or hired in.

17 yrs
MEDIAN CAREER AT THE FIRST DIRECTORSHIP

21 yrs
MEDIAN CAREER AT THE FIRST MD TITLE

8 yrs
AT THE BUSINESS BEFORE AN INTERNAL PROMOTION TO DIRECTOR

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IN SUMMARY

What the careers have in common

The board comes about seventeen years in, and the managing director's chair around five years after that. Most people get there by being promoted where they already work.

We read the full career record of 244 regional, divisional and managing directors and chief executives across 108 UK contractors and specialist businesses, one profile at a time. The findings are written for boards planning succession or hiring a managing director, and for the operations, commercial and regional directors working out how the next step tends to happen.

01 **A directorship arrives about seventeen years in.** The median first directorship comes 16.7 years into a career, and half the field got there between 11 and 21 years. 40 people made it inside ten.

02 **The MD title follows about five years later.** 113 of the 244 have held a managing director or chief executive title, at a median of 20.8 years into their careers and 5.2 years after their first directorship.

03 **Most are promoted where they work.** 132 of 216 first directorships (61%) were internal promotions, after a median 8.1 years at the business. The MD title follows the same pattern: 65 of 105 were promoted from within.

04 **Three doors into the MD role.** The step to MD is taken most often from operations or construction director (27), regional, divisional or sector director (27) or commercial or finance director (16).

05 **Most hold a degree, though it is not a requirement.** 143 of the 244 hold a confirmed degree and 42 a postgraduate qualification. Engineering (53) and construction management (49) lead the first degrees, and those without a degree on record reached the MD title no later.

06 **Quantity surveyors reach the board soonest.** Careers that began in quantity surveying reached a first directorship at a median 14.8 years, against 17.8 for engineering and 18.5 for site and operations, the largest starting point.

07 **Directors in their late thirties, MDs in their early forties.** Estimated from education dates, the median first directorship comes at age 37.5 and the first MD title at 43.5. People born in the late 1970s reached the board at much the same age as those born a decade earlier.

THE PROFILES

Who is in the panel

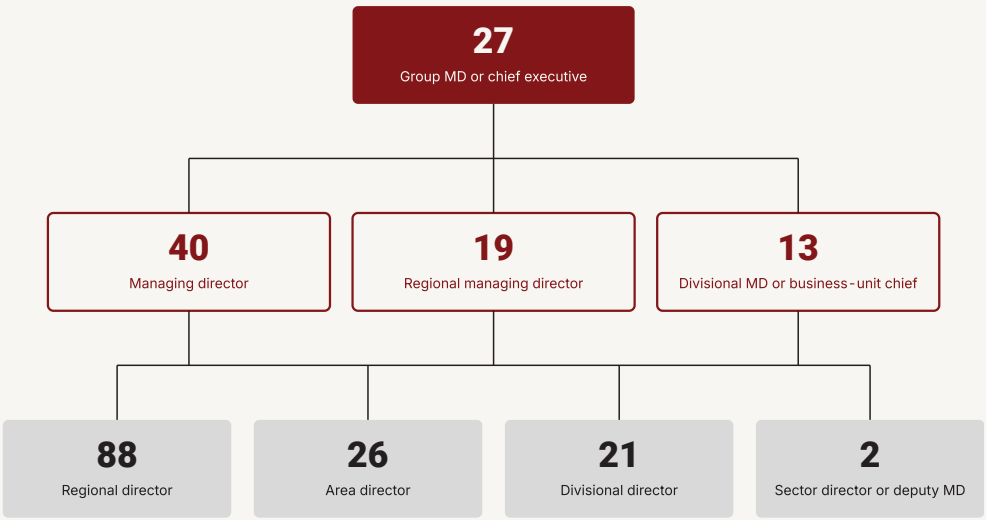
The 244 people fall into three tiers of a typical contracting group, from the group chief executive down to the regional, divisional and sector directors who run a patch or a market.

Of the 244, 27 lead a whole group as chief executive or group managing director, 72 are managing directors of an operating company, region or division, and 137 sit on a regional, divisional or sector board, one of the two most common steps into the MD's chair.

27 11% of the panel
GROUP MD OR CHIEF EXECUTIVE

72 30% of the panel
MANAGING DIRECTOR

137 56% of the panel
REGIONAL, DIVISIONAL OR SECTOR DIRECTOR



Each person is placed by their current title on LinkedIn. The structure is typical, not any one firm's: most groups have several MDs, and each MD several regional or divisional directors. Eight people hold other senior titles, such as associate divisional director or director of construction, and are counted in every other figure in this report.

The middle tier covers 40 managing directors of a company or business, 19 regional managing directors, many of them in partnership housing and housebuilding, and 13 divisional MDs or business-unit chief executives. In the director tier, regional directors are the largest group at 88, followed by 26 area directors and 21 divisional directors.

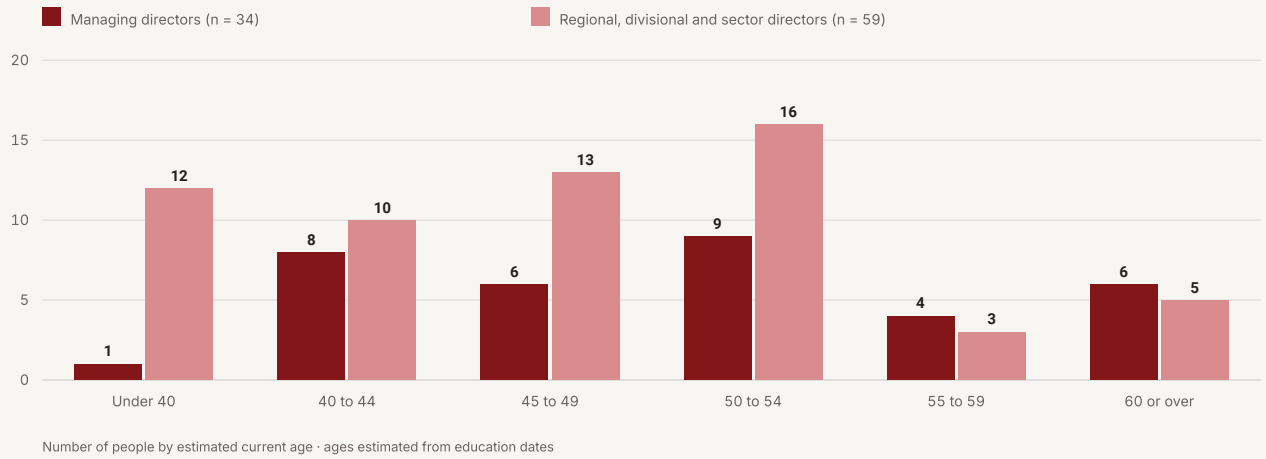
THE PROFILES

Age across the tiers

The industry looks well placed for the next decade of MD appointments. The thinner layer is further down, among directors under 40.

In the group we can date, 22 regional, divisional and sector directors are under 45, against 10 managing directors aged 55 or over: about two potential successors in the right age band for every MD in the later stage of a career.

Estimated from education dates, today's managing directors have a median age of 52, with half between 44 and 55. The regional, divisional and sector directors below them have a median of 48, with half between 41 and 52.



Number of people by estimated current age · ages estimated from education dates

The spread is not even. 10 of the 34 dated MDs (29%) are 55 or over, and 6 are 60 or over, so a large share of the MD tier is within a decade of typical retirement age. Only one is under 40. In the director tier the largest band is 50 to 54, at 16 people, while 12 of 59 (20%) are under 40.

The bench below the MD's chair is only about four years younger than the board it would succeed, so most of the next generation of MDs will be appointed in their late forties and fifties. For a business planning succession, the directors now in their early forties, and the operations and commercial managers behind them, are the group to develop. It also makes an external MD appointment a realistic part of most succession plans, which matches the 38% of MD titles in this analysis that were filled from outside.

Ages can be estimated for 34 of the 72 MDs and 59 of the 137 regional, divisional and sector directors, mostly those who went to university straight from school. Only 6 of the 27 group chief executives can be dated, too few to report.

SECTION 01

Tenure to directorship

Half of today's directors took their first directorship between 11 and 21 years into their careers, at a median of 16.7 years. Those promoted from within had been at the business a median 8.1 years.

SECTION 01

Tenure to directorship

16.7 yrs

Median career at the first directorship, with half the field between 11 and 21 years

61%

Promoted within the business. The other 39% were appointed on joining

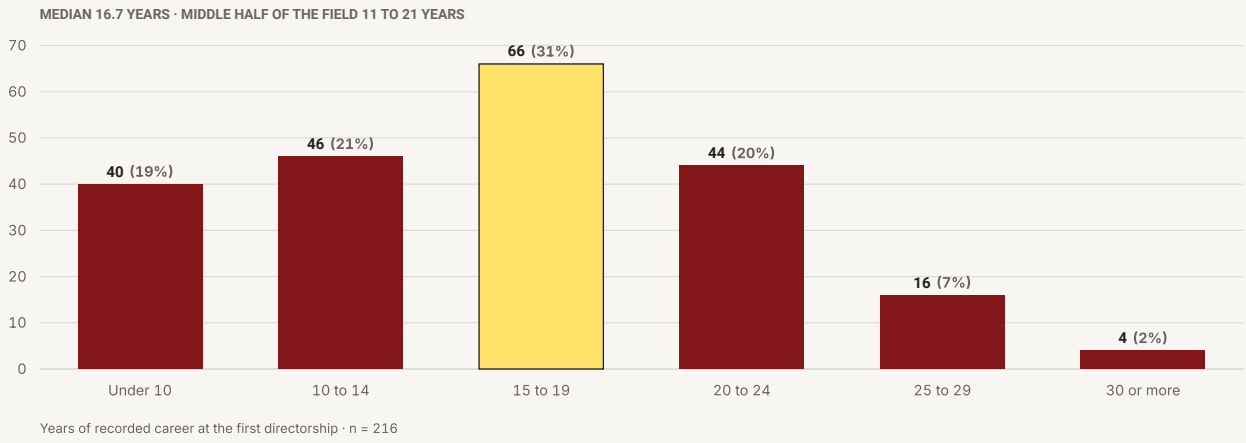
3 in 5

Stepped up from operations, construction or project roles (61%). 31% came through commercial roles and 7% through functional ones

The median first directorship comes 16.7 years into a recorded career, and the band from fifteen to nineteen years is the largest, at 66 of 216.

Below the median, 46 people were appointed between ten and fifteen years in and 40 inside ten years. Above it, 20 took their first directorship twenty-five years or more into their careers. The mean, at 16.4 years, sits close to the median, so the typical figure is not being pulled by a few long careers.

Internal and external appointments arrive at almost exactly the same point: 16.8 years for those promoted from within and 16.7 for those appointed on joining.

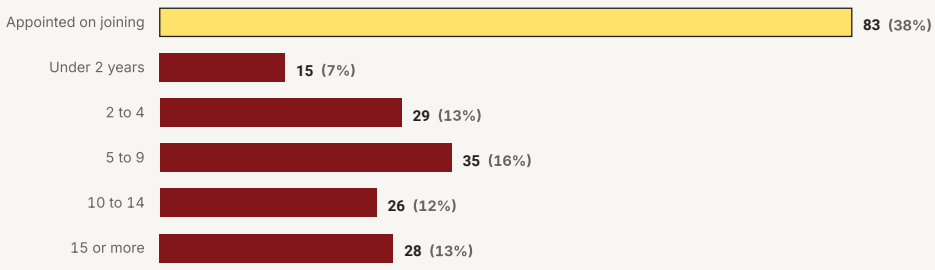


Years from the first role on record to the first directorship.

Time at the business when the directorship came

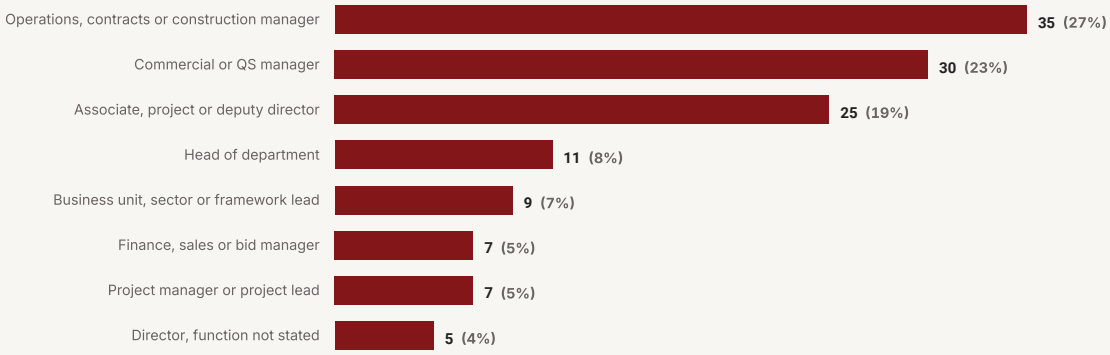
For the 132 people promoted to their first directorship from inside a business, the median time there beforehand was 8.1 years, and the middle half ranged from 3.9 to 12.5 years.

Across all 216 first directorships the median time at the business is 3.1 years, because 83 people (38%) took the title on the day they joined. At the other end, 28 had been with the business fifteen years or more when they were made a director, and 26 between ten and fourteen.



Unbroken time at the business on the day of the first directorship · n = 216

Internal promotion to the board usually follows several roles inside the same business. 45 of the 132 were promoted after a single role there, 33 after two, and 54 after three or more. The role they step up from is most often an operations, contracts or construction manager (35) or a commercial or QS manager (30), followed by associate, project and deputy directors (25).



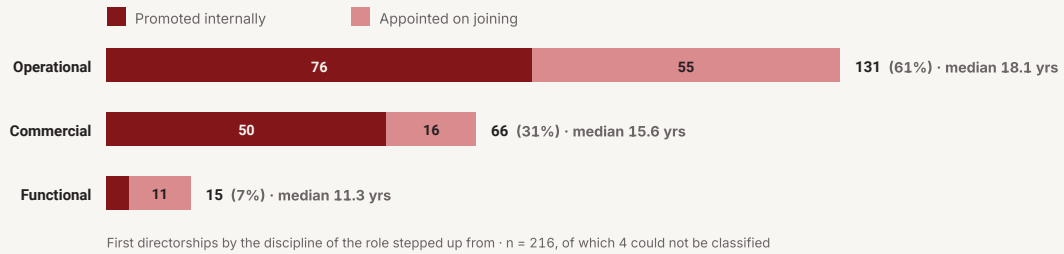
Role held immediately before, internal promotions to a first directorship · n = 132 (groups of fewer than three not shown)

WHAT THIS MEANS FOR A BUSINESS

A business that wants to grow its own directors is typically looking at eight years and two or three roles inside the firm, most often through the operations or commercial management grade. That gives a clear window for development plans to work in.

The route through

Grouping the role people stepped up from into three disciplines, three in five first directorships came up the operational line: 131 of 216 (61%). The commercial route accounts for 66 (31%) and functional specialisms for 15 (7%).



First directorships by the discipline of the role stepped up from · n = 216, of which 4 could not be classified

The commercial route is the most home-grown and the quicker of the two main lines. 50 of its 66 directors were promoted where they already worked, and they reached the board at a median 15.6 years, against 18.1 for the operational route. Functional directors are mostly hired in (11 of 15), typically specialists in design, development, property, safety or marketing.

TABLE 1 · THE ROLES INSIDE EACH ROUTE

ROLE STEPPED UP FROM	FIRST DIRECTORSHIPS
Operational	131
Operations, contracts or construction manager	51
Associate, project or deputy director	32
Business unit, sector or framework lead	19
Project manager or project lead	14
Commercial	66
Commercial or QS manager	36
Finance, sales or bid manager	10
Associate, project or deputy director	7
Functional	15

Each role is placed by its title. Where a title does not state a discipline, such as associate director or business unit leader, the person is placed by the discipline in which they had spent most of their career up to that point. Smaller categories, including heads of department, are not listed but are included in each total.

Associate, project and deputy directors

41 people stepped up from a director-grade role below the board. 28 were project, programme or framework directors, 9 associate directors and 3 bid or preconstruction directors. Their careers are overwhelmingly operational: 20 started in site and operations and 10 in engineering, and 33 of the 41 had spent most of their careers in operational roles. Only 6 came up mainly through commercial work. In the analysis above they sit in the operational route (32) or the commercial route (7) accordingly.

The fast track

40 people reached a first directorship inside ten years of starting work. They are a distinct group, and they have gone furthest: 25 of the 40 have since held an MD title, and 10 now lead a whole group.

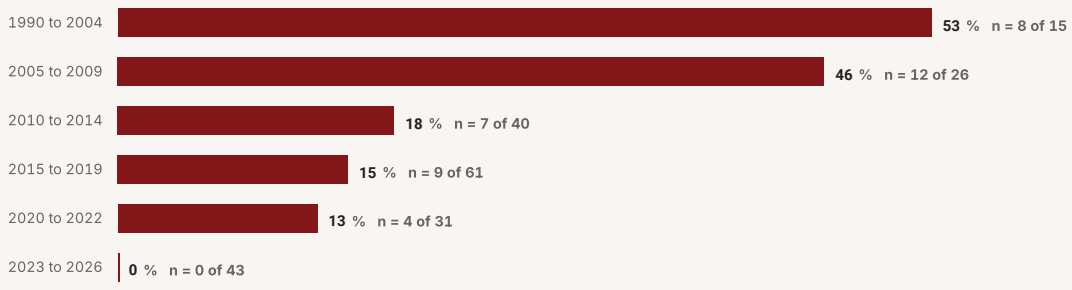
TABLE 2 · DIRECTORS INSIDE TEN YEARS, AGAINST EVERYONE ELSE

MEASURE	INSIDE TEN YEARS	TEN YEARS OR MORE
First directorships	40	176
Appointed on joining a new business	50%	36%
Started in quantity surveying, finance, sales or bids	38%	22%
Started in site and operations	20%	37%
Median estimated age at the directorship	29.5 (n = 16)	38.5 (n = 79)
Have since held an MD title	62%	40%
Now a group chief executive or group MD	25%	7%

Three threads run through the group. They moved to get the title: half were appointed on joining a new business, against 36% of everyone else. They came from the commercial side more often, and from site and operations far less. And they were young, at an estimated 30 against 38 where an age can be estimated.

Is the fast track getting faster?

There is no sign of it. 12 of the 40 fast-track directorships date from 2005 to 2009, the years before the downturn, and none of the 43 first directorships since 2023 came inside ten years. The earlier periods overstate the share, because a fast-track director from the 1990s is far more likely still to be working today than a slow one, but the recent figures carry little of that effect.



Share of first directorships that came inside ten years of career, by year of appointment

Ages tell the same story. Comparing generations over the same window, people born between 1980 and 1984 reached the board at a median age of 35.1, against 37.3 for those born between 1970 and 1974 (see section 02). The route to the board has held steady, with at most a slight drift younger, and it still takes most people fifteen years or more.

SECTION 01

Key findings

01 **The median first directorship comes 16.7 years into a career, with half the field between 11 and 21 years.**

02 **61% are promoted where they already work, after a median 8.1 years there.** The other 39% are hired in.

03 **Three in five come up the operational line.** The commercial route is quicker, at 15.6 years against 18.1, and more often home-grown.

04 **40 people made director inside ten years.** Half moved business to do it, and 62% have since become MD. There is no sign of the timeline shortening.





SECTION 02

From director to managing director

113 of the 244 have held a managing director or chief executive title. The median MD was appointed 20.8 years into a career and 5.2 years after a first directorship.

SECTION 02

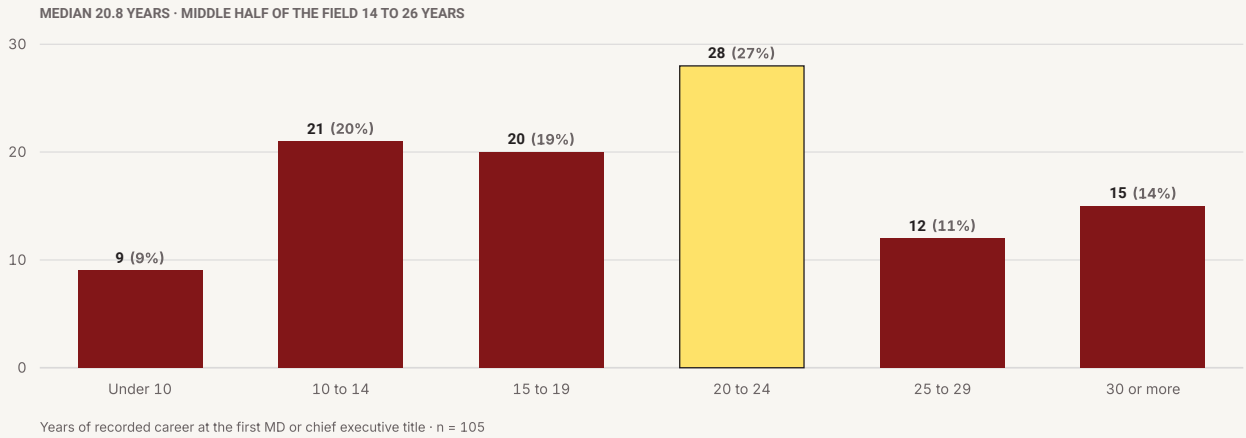
From director to managing director

20.8 yrs
Median career at the first MD or chief executive title

5.2 yrs
Median gap from the first directorship to the MD title

62%
Of MD titles went to someone already inside the business

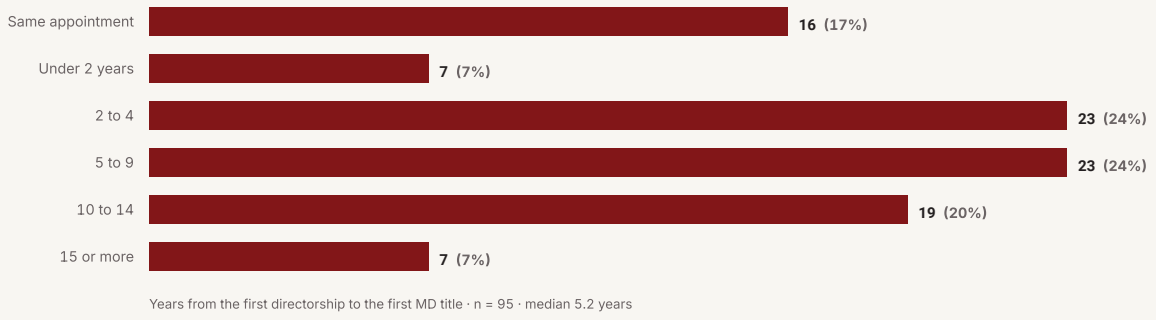
113 of the 244 careers (46%) include a managing director or chief executive title. For the 105 whose careers are recorded from before that appointment, the median came 20.8 years in, with half the field between 14 and 26 years.



The spread is wider than for a first directorship. 9 people held an MD title inside ten years, usually at a business they founded or helped to grow, while 15 reached it thirty years or more into a career, often after a long run on a regional or divisional board.

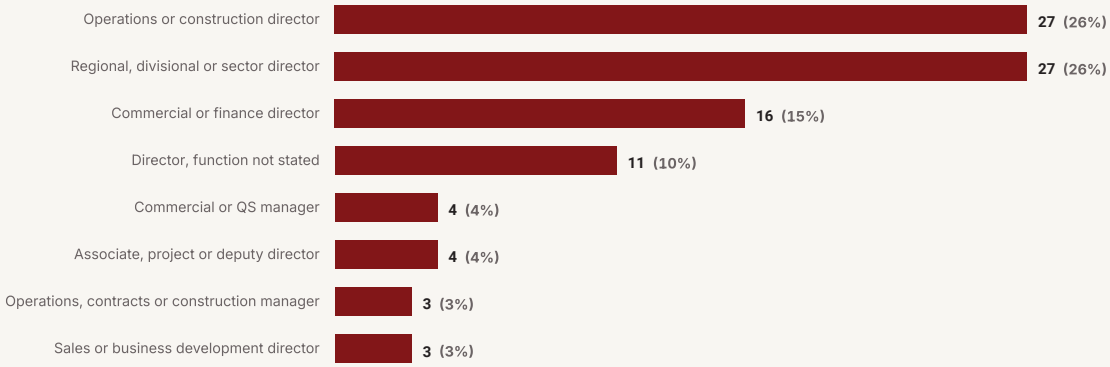
The gap between the two

Of the 95 people whose careers show both milestones, the median gap from first directorship to first MD title is 5.2 years, with half between 2.2 and 10.4 years. 16 went straight to managing director as their first directorship. For 46 people (48%) the gap was two to nine years.



The role before managing director

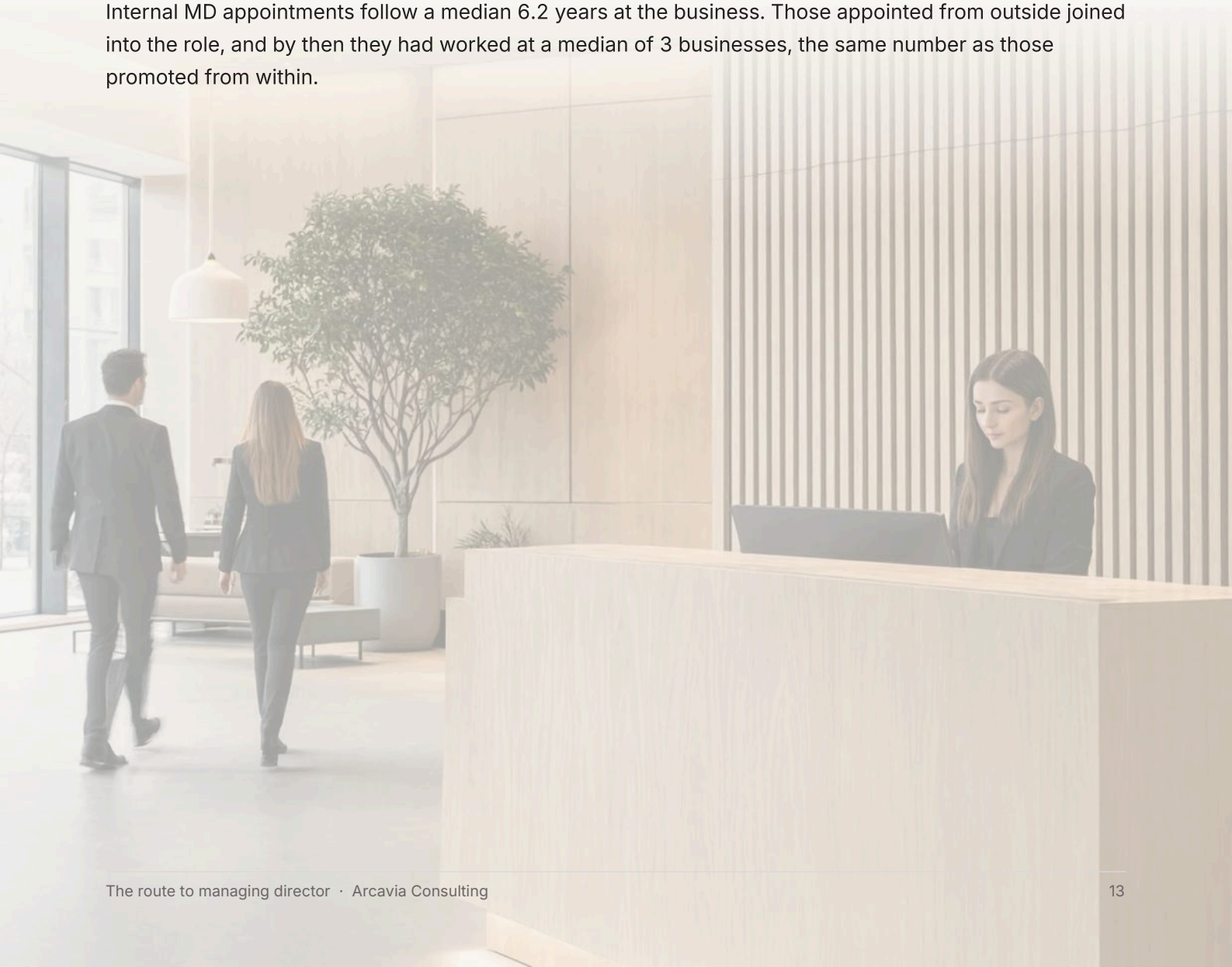
Three director roles account for most of the step into the MD's chair: operations or construction director (27), regional, divisional or sector director (27), and commercial or finance director (16).



Role held immediately before the first MD title · n = 105 (groups of fewer than three not shown)

Commercial directors who move up are mostly promoted where they already work: 13 of the 16 were internal. Regional and divisional directors take both routes, with 17 promoted internally and 10 appointed from elsewhere.

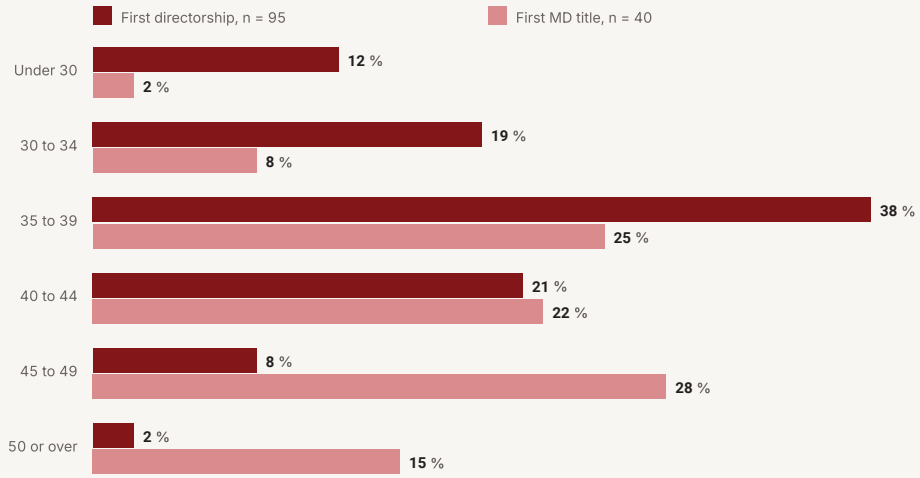
Internal MD appointments follow a median 6.2 years at the business. Those appointed from outside joined into the role, and by then they had worked at a median of 3 businesses, the same number as those promoted from within.



Age at appointment

The median first directorship comes at an estimated age of 37.5, with half the field appointed between 34 and 41. The first MD title follows at a median 43.5, with half between 36 and 48.

LinkedIn does not give ages, so we estimate them from education dates. A full-time first degree is taken to start at 18 and a secondary school record at 11. That dates 102 of the 244, and puts their median age at the first job at 21.0, which is what you would expect of a largely graduate field.

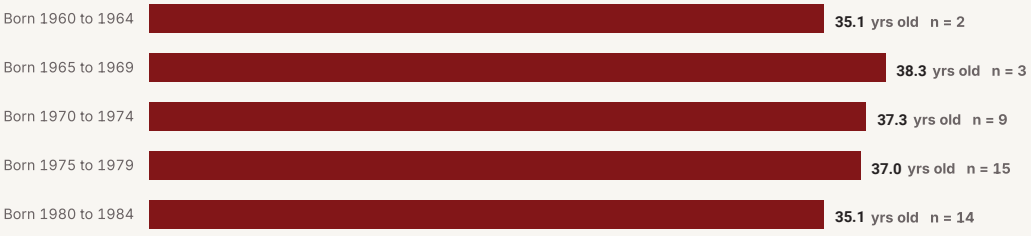


Estimated age at appointment, share of each group · ages estimated from education dates

Is the route getting quicker?

Grouping MDs by the decade they were appointed suggests the title now takes far longer to reach: a median 10.1 years of career in the 1990s, against 17.2 in the 2010s and 22.3 in the 2020s. That reading does not hold up. Everyone in this panel holds a senior role today, so anyone appointed MD in the 1990s and still working had to get there young, and only nine of the MD appointments date from before 2010.

Comparing generations over the same window removes that effect. We took everyone who became a director by the age of 40, in equal five-year groups by year of birth from 1960 to 1984, so every group has had the full window. The median age at a first directorship moves only gently: 38.3 for those born in the late 1960s, 37.3 and 37.0 for the early and late 1970s, and 35.1 for those born between 1980 and 1984.



Median estimated age at the first directorship, in five-year birth groups, among those now over 40 who became directors by 40

The route to the board has held steady for a generation, with the youngest group arriving a year or two sooner at most. The two earliest groups are small (2 and 3 people), so they carry less weight. Too few of the dated MDs are old enough to run the same comparison for the MD title.

SECTION 02

Key findings

01 **113 of the 244 have held an MD or chief executive title, at a median 20.8 years into a career and 5.2 years after a first directorship.**

02 **The step to MD comes most often from operations or construction director (27) and regional, divisional or sector director (27), then commercial or finance director (16).**

03 **The median estimated age is 37.5 at the first directorship and 43.5 at the first MD title, and the age at which people reach the board has held steady across generations.**



SECTION 03

Degrees and starting points

143 of the 244 hold a confirmed degree, led by engineering and construction management. The largest starting point is site and operations, and quantity surveyors reach the board soonest.

SECTION 03

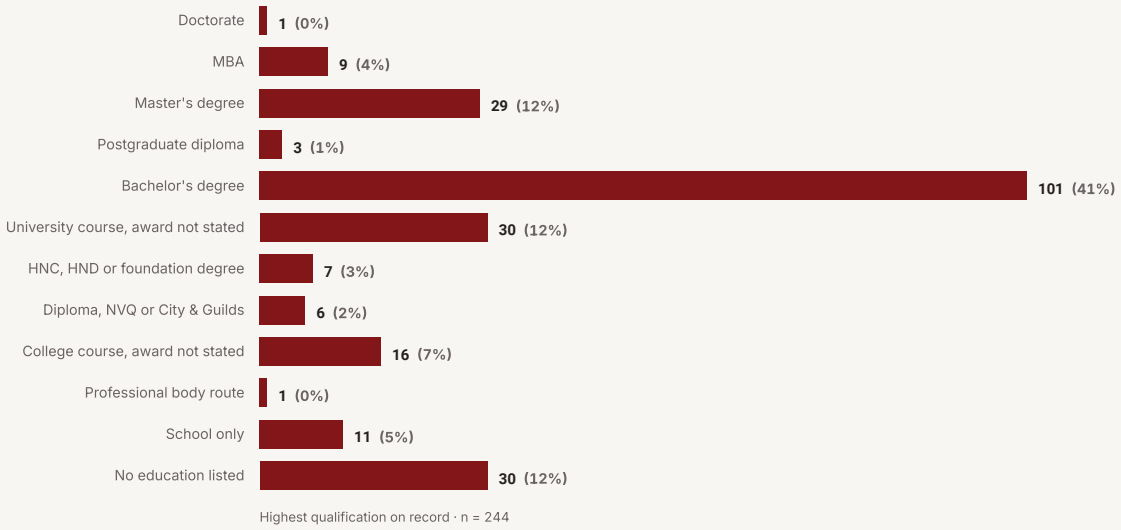
Degrees and starting points

59%
Hold a confirmed degree, 143 of the 244

17.1 v 17.0
Median years to the board, with and without a degree

28
Studied in Nottingham, the leading place of study

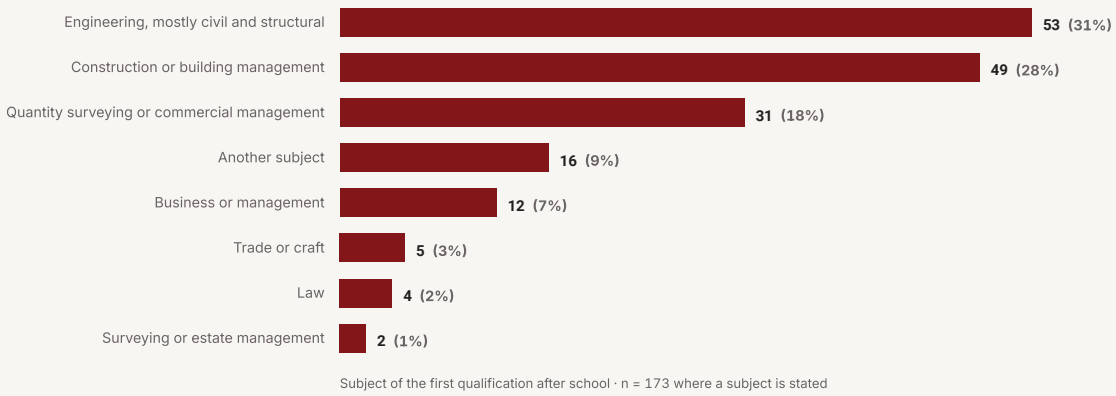
143 of the 244 (59%) hold a confirmed degree, and 42 hold a postgraduate qualification: a master's, an MBA, a postgraduate diploma or a doctorate. A further 30 list a university course without stating the award.



The part-time route is well represented. 28 people list an HNC, HND or foundation degree, and 19 of them went on to a full degree, typically while working. 16 list an executive programme, such as Cranfield, INSEAD or Harvard, or a company leadership scheme. 9 hold an MBA. 30 list no education at all, which says more about how LinkedIn profiles are kept than about qualifications.

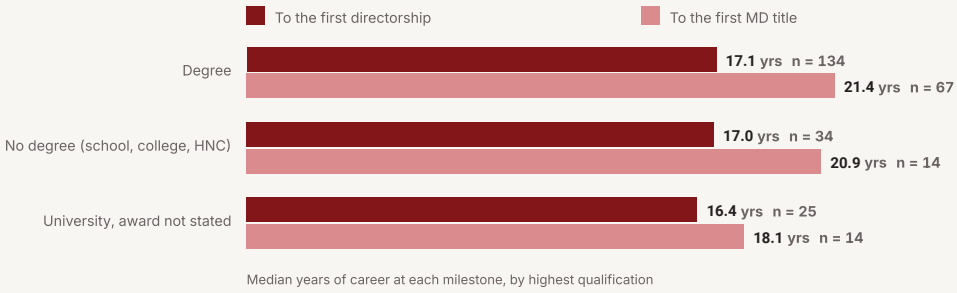
What they studied

Where a subject is stated, engineering (53) and construction or building management (49) lead the first qualification after school, followed by quantity surveying or commercial management (31). Business and management (12) appears more often as a second qualification, usually a master's or MBA taken mid-career.

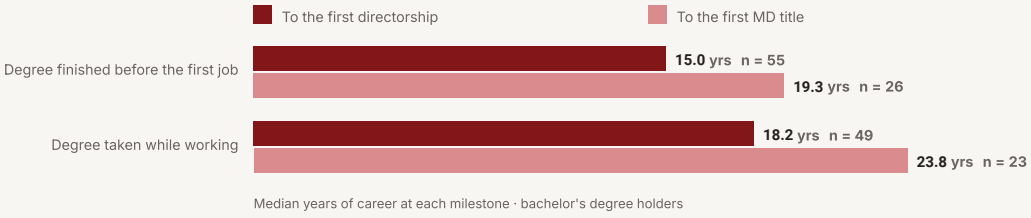


Does a degree change the timing?

No. Those with a confirmed degree reached a first directorship at a median 17.1 years and the MD title at 21.4. Those whose highest qualification is school, college, an HNC or a vocational award got there at 17.0 and 20.9 years.



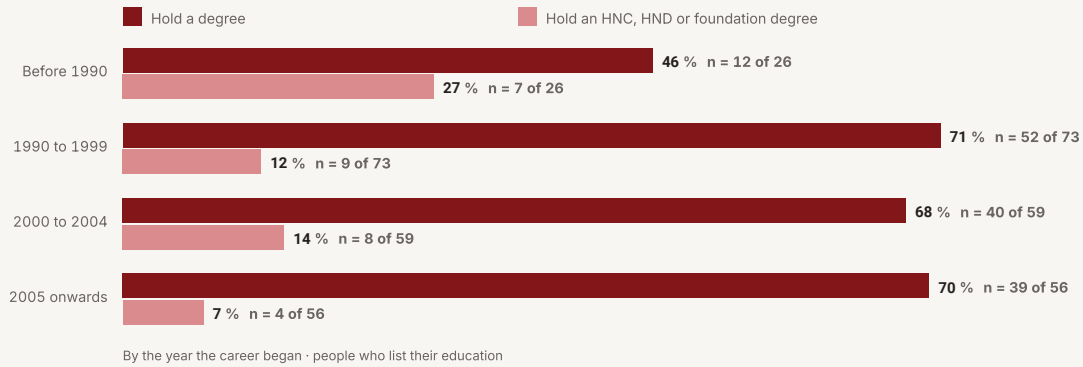
When the degree was taken matters more than whether there is one. Those who finished a bachelor's before their first job reached the board at a median 15.0 years and the MD title at 19.3. Those who took it while working, often part-time after an HNC, took 18.2 and 23.8 years. They also started work three or four years younger, so by age the two groups arrive at much the same point, and the top of UK contracting is open to both routes.



A postgraduate qualification does not change the timing: the MD title came at a median 21.4 years for those with one and 21.8 for those with a bachelor's only. It is more common among those who reach the top, though. 27 of the 42 with a postgraduate qualification (64%) have held an MD title, against 41 of the 101 with a bachelor's only (41%).

Is the degree route changing?

The degree became the norm in the 1990s and has stayed there. Among those who list their education, 46% of people whose careers began before 1990 hold a degree. For every group since, the figure is about 70%.



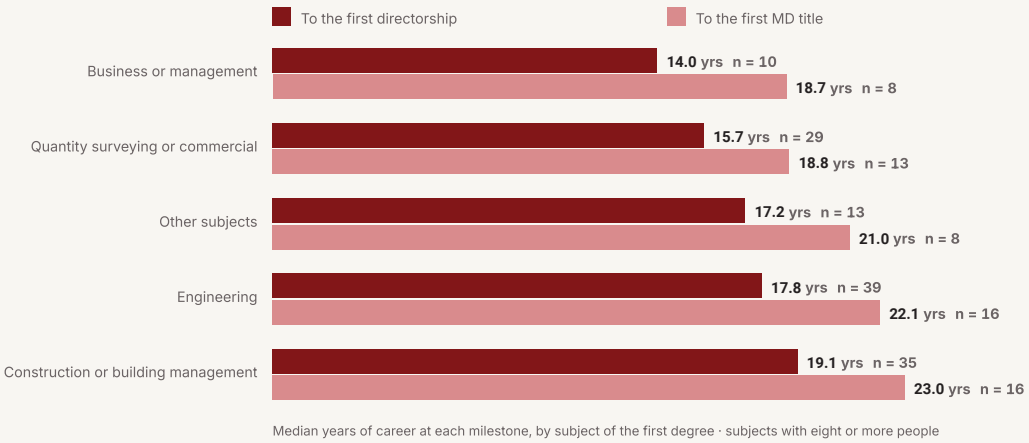
By the year the career began · people who list their education

The HNC and HND route has faded as the degree has grown. 27% of those who started before 1990 list one, against 7% of those who started from 2005. Learning on the job has not gone away, though: it has moved to the degree itself. Of the degree holders who started from 2005, 16 took their bachelor's while working, up from 11 of those who started between 2000 and 2004, which fits the growth of part-time and apprenticeship degrees.

Everyone here reached director level, so the earliest group is made up of people who have stayed in senior roles the longest, and it is small (26 people). Shares are of those who list any education.

Does the subject matter?

Quantity surveying graduates reach the board soonest of the three main subjects, at a median 15.7 years, against 17.8 for engineering and 19.1 for construction management. The same order holds for the MD title.

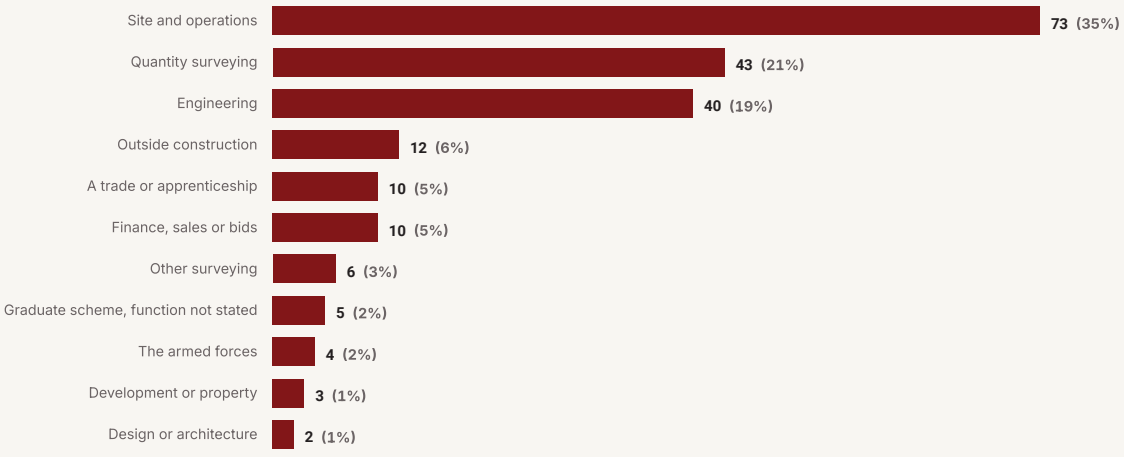


Median years of career at each milestone, by subject of the first degree · subjects with eight or more people

This matches the pattern by starting point below: a commercial grounding brings people to the board earlier. Business and management graduates are quicker still, at 14.0 years to a first directorship, though that group is only 10 people.

Where they started

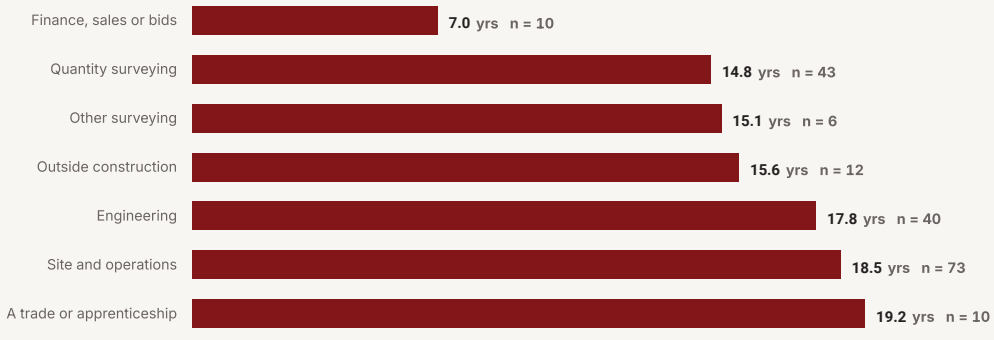
208 careers are recorded from before the first directorship. The largest starting point is site and operations (73), followed by quantity surveying (43) and engineering (40). 10 began in a trade or apprenticeship, 4 in the armed forces, and 12 outside construction altogether.



Function of the first role on record · n = 208 careers recorded from before the first directorship

Which starting points reach the board soonest

Careers that began in quantity surveying reached a first directorship at a median 14.8 years, against 17.8 for engineering and 18.5 for site and operations. A commercial career builds the board's financial language early, and the commercial director title is itself a common first directorship. The 10 who started in finance, sales or bids got there fastest of all, at 7.0 years, though that group is small.



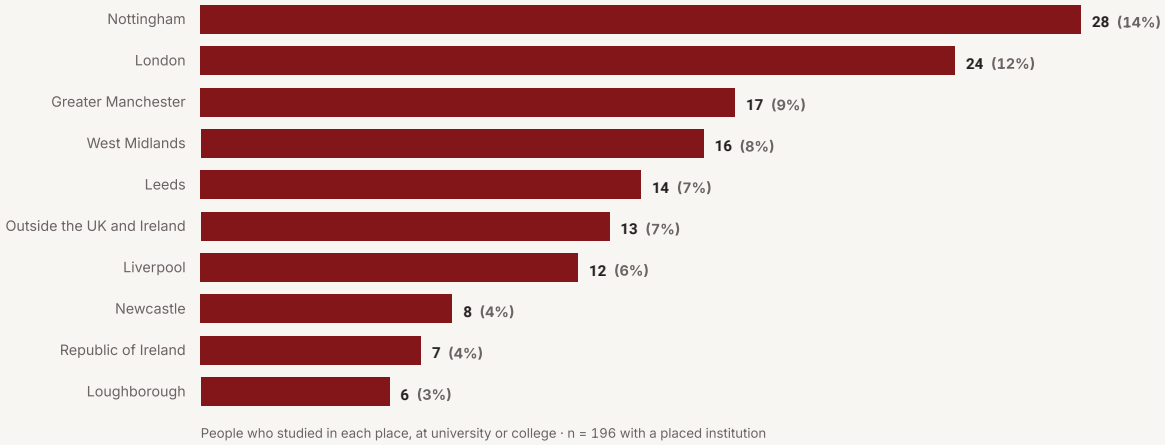
Median years of career at the first directorship, by starting function · groups of six or more

The same order holds at MD level on smaller numbers: quantity surveying 18.5 years (n = 22), engineering 21.3 (n = 18) and site and operations 21.4 (n = 25).

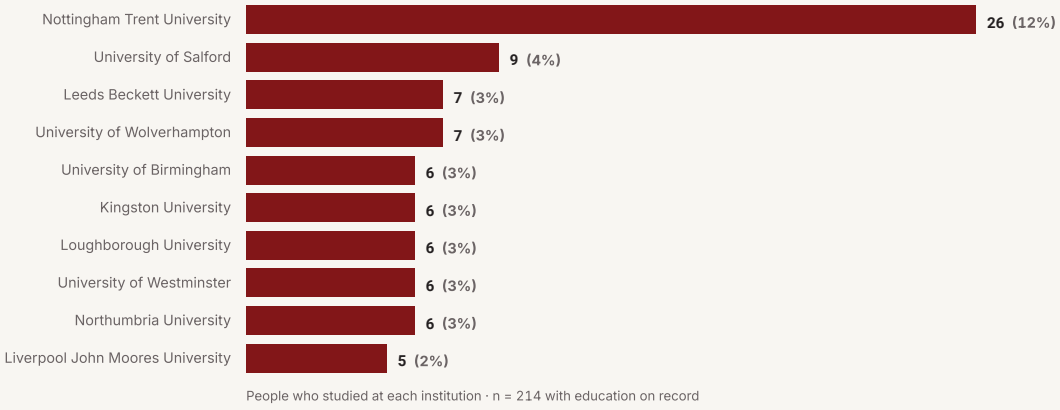


Where they studied: the talent hubs

Nottingham is the single largest source of today's construction leaders. 28 of the 196 people whose university or college we can place studied there, ahead of London (24), Greater Manchester (17), the West Midlands (16) and Leeds (14).



Nottingham's lead is recent. Of those whose careers began before 2000, 5 of 89 studied there, behind London (13) and Greater Manchester (12). Of those who started from 2000, it is 23 of 107, one in five. Almost all of them went to Nottingham Trent University, mainly for quantity surveying (10) and construction management (8). Its graduates reached a first directorship at a median 14.7 years, against 16.7 across the panel, and 11 of the 26 have since held an MD title.



Former polytechnics and earlier names are counted under today's institution, such as Leeds Metropolitan under Leeds Beckett. A person who studied in two places counts once in each. Professional bodies, training providers and schools are not placed.

SECTION 03

Key findings

01 **143 of the 244 hold a degree, and it makes no difference to timing: 17.1 years to the board with one, 17.0 without.**

02 **Degrees have been the norm since the 1990s, held by about seven in ten.** The HNC route has faded, and more people now take their degree while working.

03 **Commercial starts reach the board soonest: quantity surveying graduates at 15.7 years, against 17.8 for engineering.**

04 **Nottingham is the leading hub, with one in five of those who started since 2000.** Nottingham Trent graduates reach the board in a median 14.7 years.



SECTION 04

Promotion versus move

61% of first directorships and 62% of first MD titles went to someone already inside the business. Internal and external appointees arrive at the same point in their careers.

SECTION 04

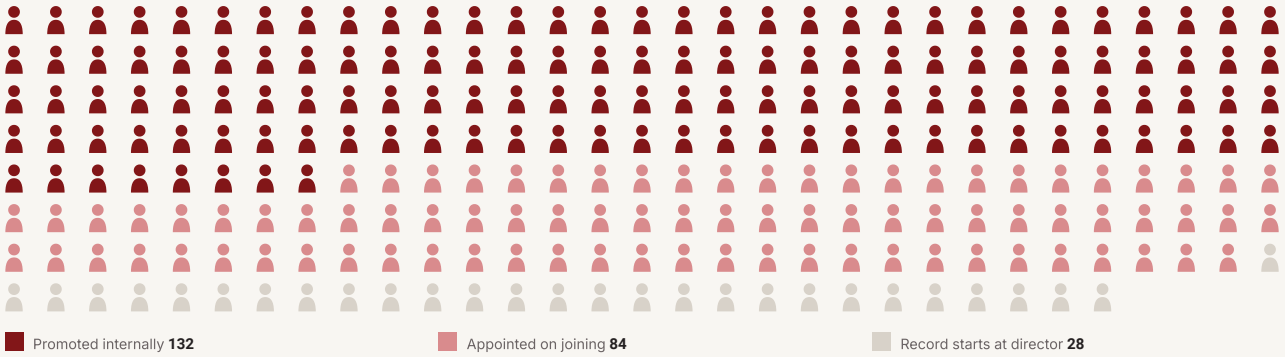
Promotion versus move

61%
Of first directorships were internal promotions

62%
Of first MD titles were internal promotions

16.8 v 16.7
Median years to the board, promoted against hired in

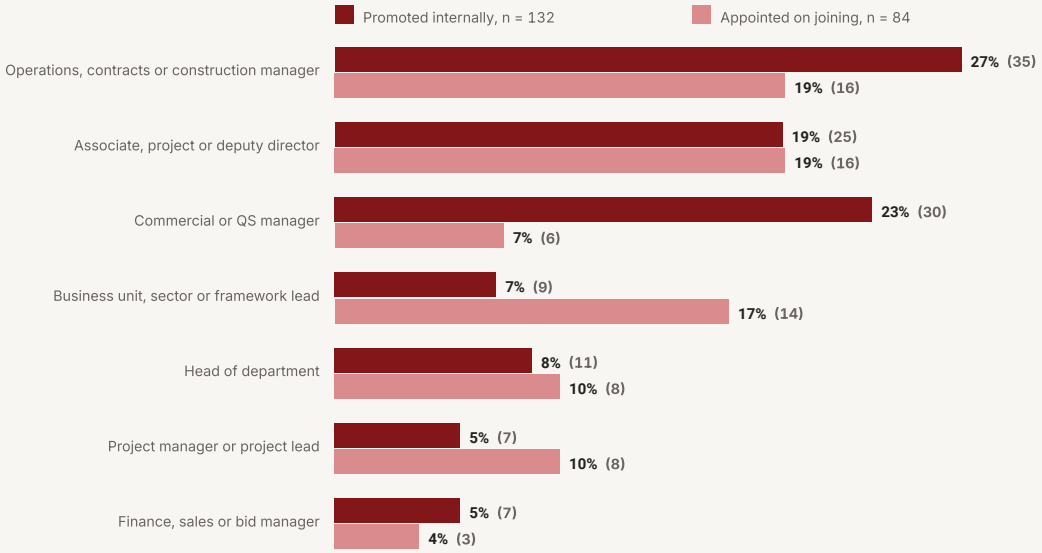
At both milestones, about three in five appointments are internal promotions. Of the 216 first directorships we can date, 132 were promotions inside the business and 84 came with a move.



Each figure is one of the 244 directors and MDs. An appointment on joining means the first directorship was the person's first role at that business. For 28 the LinkedIn record begins at director level, so the route cannot be dated.

Where each route steps up from

The two routes draw on different pools. Internal promotions come mostly from operations, contracts and construction managers (35) and commercial or QS managers (30). External appointments draw more from associate, project and deputy directors (16) and from people already running a business unit, sector or framework (14). They are bringing in someone who already runs a piece of a business, often at a different contractor.



Role held immediately before the first directorship, as a share of each route. Bands are read from the wording of the title.

The two routes compared

TABLE 3 · INTERNAL AGAINST EXTERNAL, AT EACH MILESTONE

MEASURE	PROMOTED INTERNALLY	APPOINTED ON JOINING
First directorships	132	84
Median career at the first directorship	16.8 yrs	16.7 yrs
Median time at the business beforehand	8.1 yrs	Joined into the role
Median businesses worked for, up to that point	2	3
First MD titles	65	40
Median career at the first MD title	20.8 yrs	20.7 yrs
Median time at the business beforehand	6.2 yrs	Joined into the role

Datable appointments only: n = 216 first directorships and 105 first MD titles. Businesses are counted before the appointment, excluding side roles such as non-executive and trustee positions.

The two routes reach each milestone at almost exactly the same point in a career: 16.7 years for external appointees against 16.8 for internal ones at the first directorship, and 20.7 against 20.8 at MD. The main difference is where they have been: by their first directorship, external appointees have typically worked at 3 businesses, against 2 for those promoted from within. Businesses that promote from within and businesses that hire in are drawing on people at the same stage of their careers.

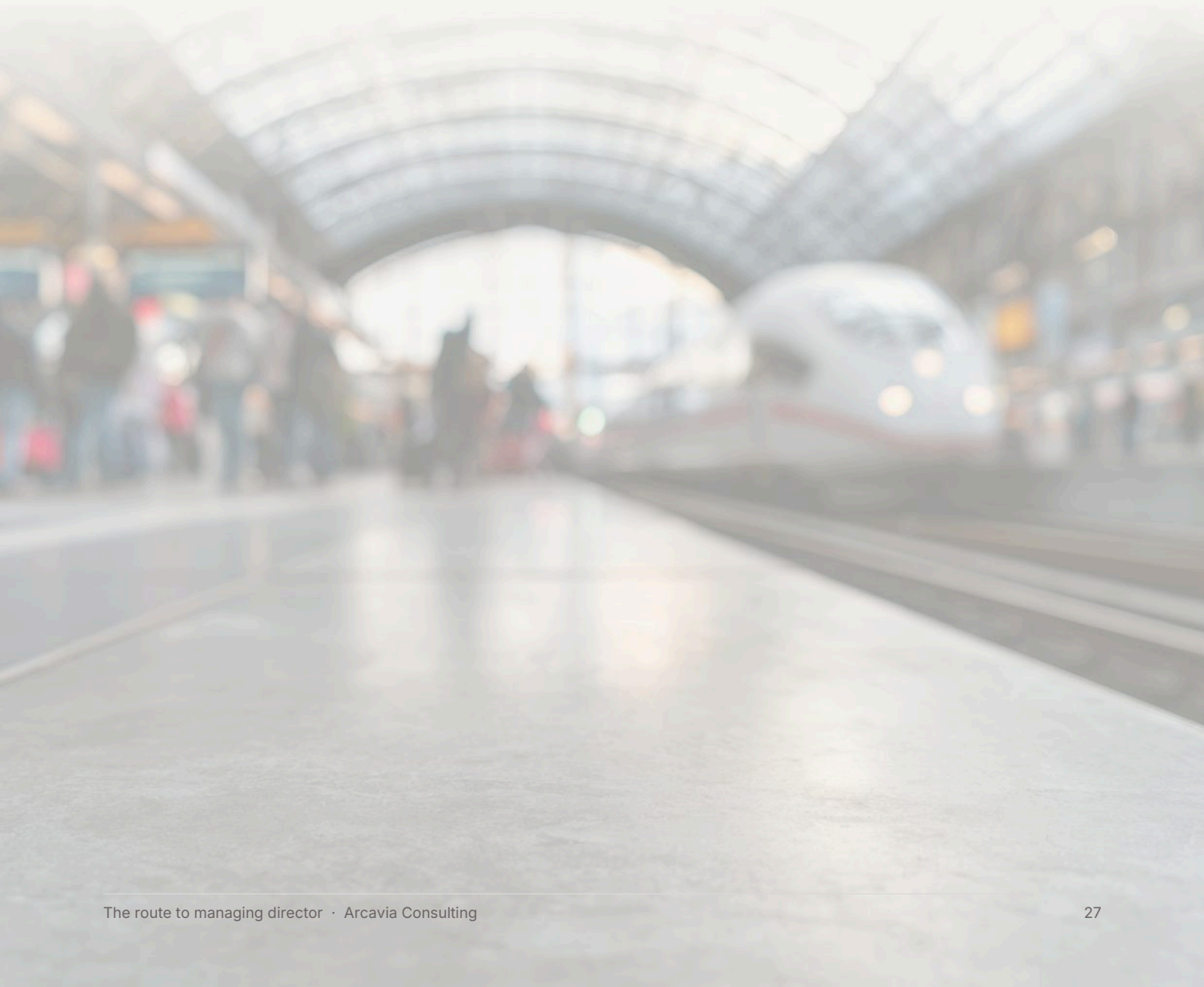
SECTION 04

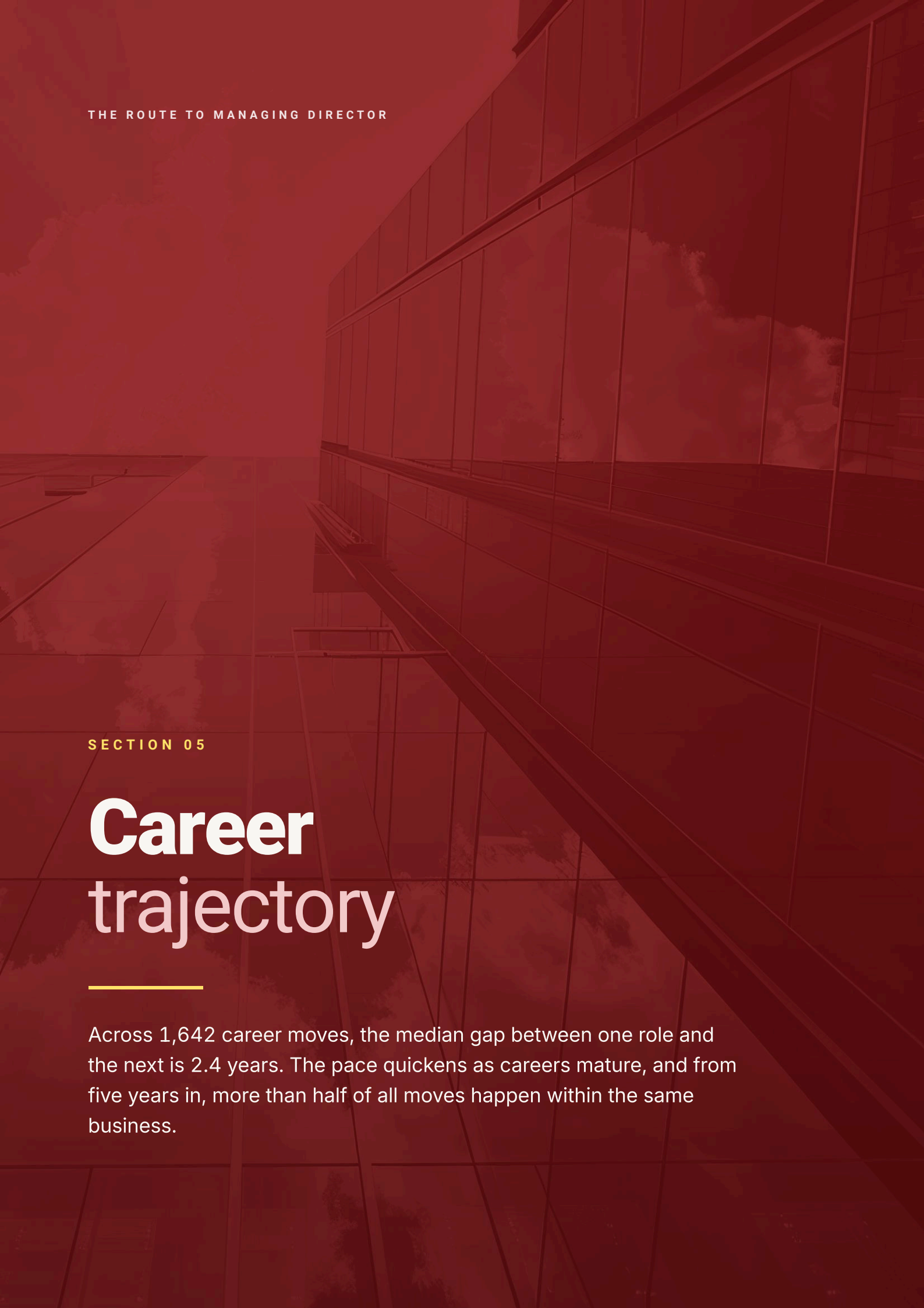
Key findings

01 **About three in five appointments are internal at both milestones: 132 of 216 first directorships and 65 of 105 first MD titles.**

02 **Internal promotions come mostly from operations and commercial managers.** External hires more often bring in an associate, project or deputy director, or someone already running a business unit.

03 **Both routes arrive at the same point in a career.** External appointees have simply worked at more businesses on the way, 3 against 2.





SECTION 05

Career trajectory

Across 1,642 career moves, the median gap between one role and the next is 2.4 years. The pace quickens as careers mature, and from five years in, more than half of all moves happen within the same business.

SECTION 05

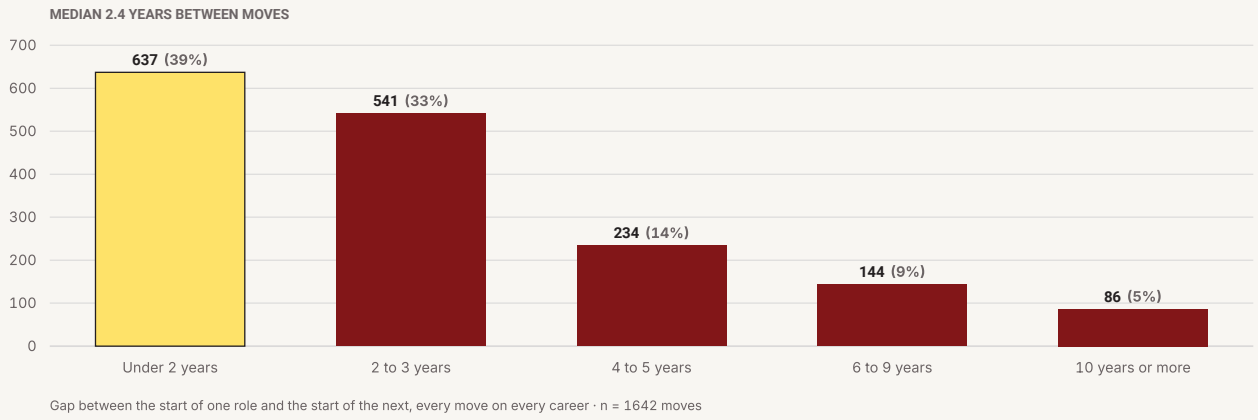
Career trajectory

1,642
Career moves measured across the panel

2.4 yrs
Median time between one role and the next

4
Businesses worked for in a median career

We measured all 1,642 moves across the 244 careers. 39% came within two years of the previous move and a further 33% at two to three years.



Gap between the start of one role and the start of the next, every move on every career · n = 1642 moves

How the pace changes

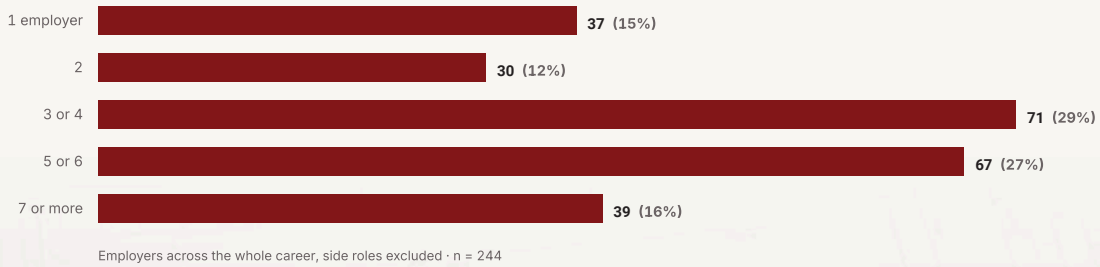
The first roles last longest. In the first five years of a career the median gap to the next move is 3.0 years, and 60% of those moves are to another business. From five years in, the pace quickens to between 2.0 and 2.5 years a move, and more than half of all moves happen inside the same business. On LinkedIn, a promotion within the same business usually appears as a new title under the same employer, so the faster pace later on largely reflects promotions.

TABLE 4 · PACE AND TYPE OF MOVE BY CAREER STAGE

YEARS INTO THE CAREER WHEN THE ROLE BEGAN	MOVES	MEDIAN GAP TO THE NEXT MOVE	MOVES WITHIN THE SAME BUSINESS
First 5 years	465	3.0 yrs	40%
5 to 9 years	296	2.5 yrs	55%
10 to 14 years	303	2.2 yrs	55%
15 to 19 years	267	2.1 yrs	55%
20 years or more	311	2.0 yrs	56%

Businesses worked for

Across a whole career, the median director or MD has worked for 4 businesses. 37 people (15%) have spent their entire recorded career with a single business, and 39 have worked for seven or more.



Employers across the whole career, side roles excluded · n = 244

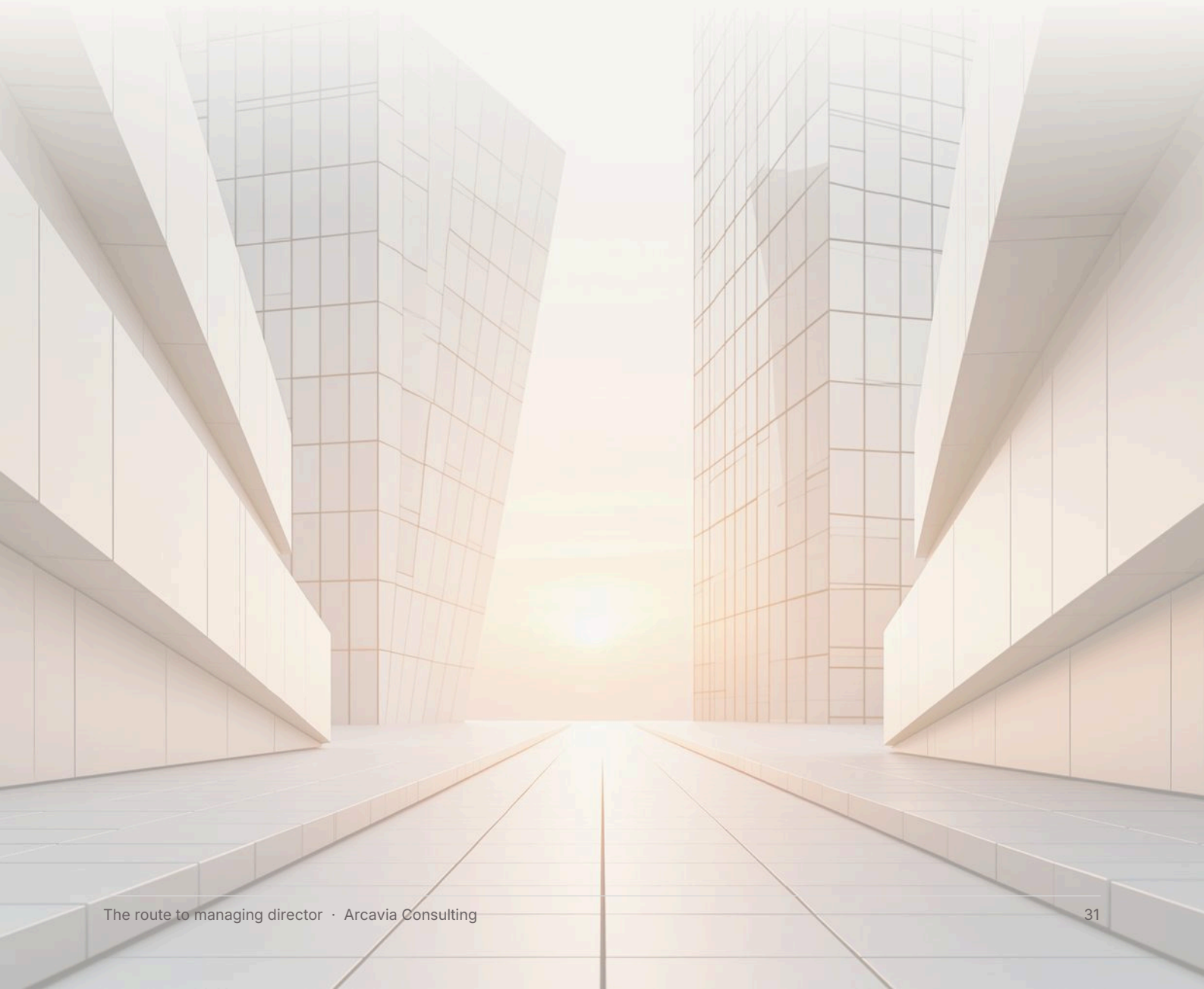
SECTION 05

Key findings

01 **The median gap between roles is 2.4 years across 1,642 moves.**

02 **Early careers move between businesses.** From five years in the pace quickens, and more than half of moves are promotions inside the same business.

03 **The median director or MD has worked for 4 businesses, and 37 (15%) have spent their whole recorded career at one.**





SECTION 06

Time in the role

133 of the 244 started their current role in or after January 2024. Current MDs have held the title a median 2.2 years so far.

SECTION 06

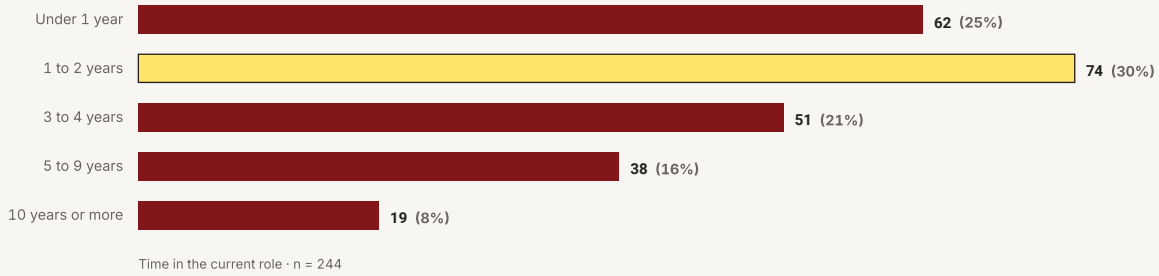
Time in the role

2.2 yrs
Median time in the current MD or chief executive role

136
In their current role for under three years

19
A decade or more in the same role

133 of the 244 (55%) started their current role in or after January 2024, which points to an active market for senior leadership over the last three years.



Time in the current role · n = 244

The 99 people currently holding an MD or chief executive title have been in post a median 2.2 years, and the 145 currently at director level a median 2.8 years. At the other end, 19 have held their current role for ten years or more.

Everyone counted here is still in post, so these are tenures to date rather than completed ones, and the full length of an appointment runs longer than these figures.

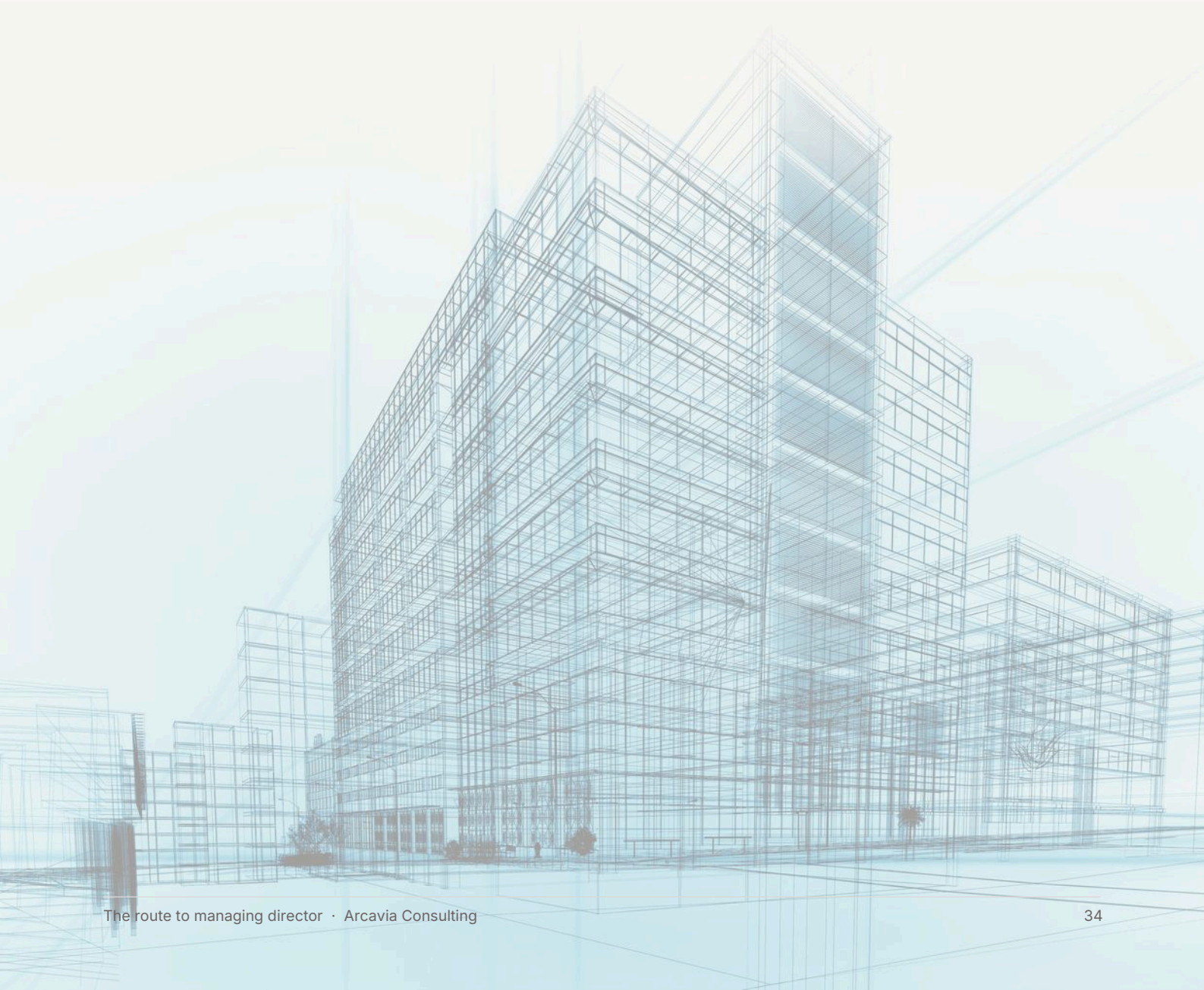
SECTION 06

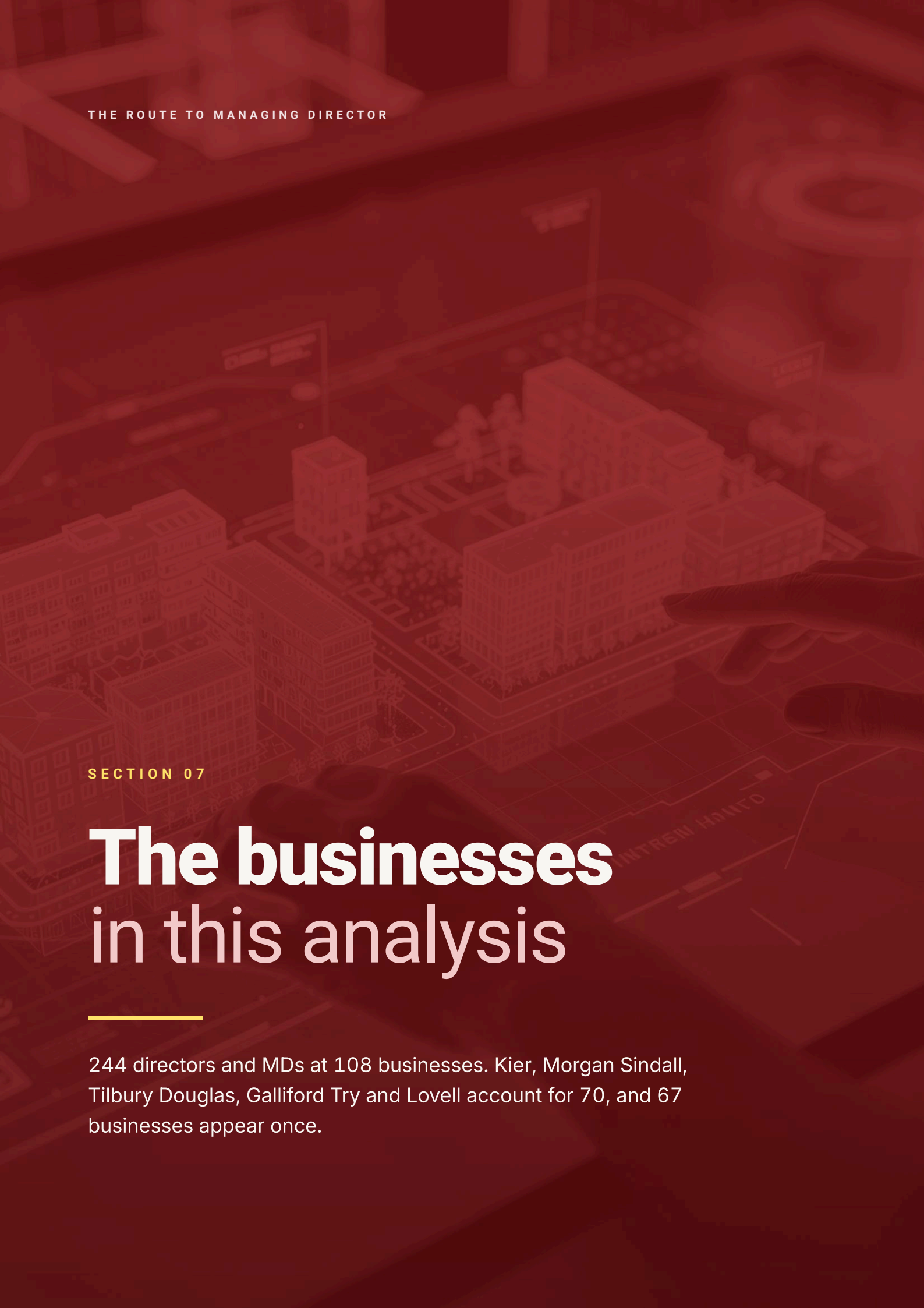
Key findings

01 **133 of the 244 (55%) started their current role in or after January 2024, a sign of an active senior market.**

02 **Current MDs and chief executives have held the title a median 2.2 years so far, and directors 2.8 years.**

03 **19 have held the same role for a decade or more.**





SECTION 07

The businesses in this analysis

244 directors and MDs at 108 businesses. Kier, Morgan Sindall, Tilbury Douglas, Galliford Try and Lovell account for 70, and 67 businesses appear once.

SECTION 07

The businesses in this analysis

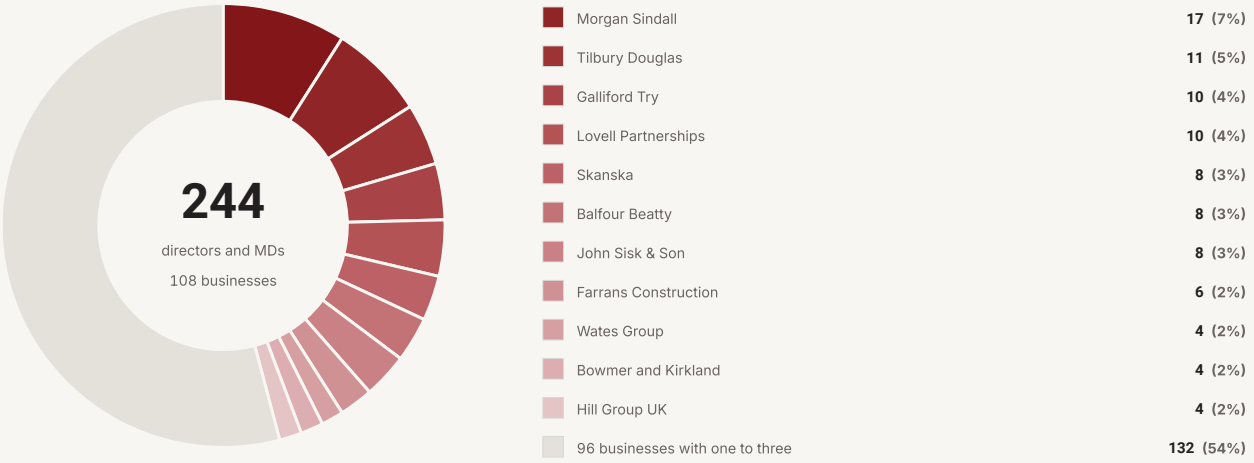
108
Businesses represented in the panel

70
Directors and MDs at the five largest employers

67
Businesses that appear once, mostly regional and specialist firms

From the national contractors to regional builders, civils specialists and housing partnerships.

The 244 directors and MDs work across 108 businesses. Five account for 70 of them, led by Kier with 22 and Morgan Sindall with 17, reflecting the large regional and divisional leadership structures that national contractors run.



Directors and MDs by current employer. Group entities are consolidated, so Morgan Sindall includes its construction and infrastructure businesses.

The other 67 businesses appear once each, a long list of regional contractors, civils and utilities specialists, housebuilders and partnership businesses, where the managing director often runs the whole company.

TABLE 5 · EVERY BUSINESS IN THE ANALYSIS, WITH THE NUMBER OF DIRECTORS AND MDS AT EACH

BUSINESS	NO.	BUSINESS	NO.	BUSINESS	NO.	BUSINESS	NO.
A E Yates	1	Dalkia UK	1	Kier Group	22	Parsons Corporation	1
Alconex Infrastructure and Solutions	1	Dodd Group	2	Knights Brown	2	Permasteelisa Group	1
Allison Homes	1	Elliott Group	1	Legacie	1	Pickerings	1
Alun Griffiths	1	Equans	3	Lindum Group	2	Portakabin	1
Amey	1	Eric Wright Group	1	LNT Construction	1	PSR Solutions	1
Ardent Construction Group	1	Esh Group	2	Lovell Partnerships	10	Quinn London	1
Bachy Soletanche (VINCI construction)	2	Falco Construction	1	Mace	1	RE:GEN Group	2
Balfour Beatty	8	Farrans Construction	6	MadiganGill	1	RED Construction Group	1
BAM UK & Ireland	3	Franki Foundations UK	1	McGoff Construction	1	Red Engineering	1
Barhale	2	Galldris Group	1	McLaren Construction Group	3	Robertson Group	1
Barnes Construction	3	Galliford Try	10	McLaughlin & Harvey	1	Seddon	1
Barnwood	1	Generation UK	2	Meinhardt	1	Severfield	2
Baxall Construction	2	Gilmartins	1	MIDA Civil Engineering	1	Skanska	8
Bechtel	2	Glencar Construction	2	Miller Homes	1	Skanska Costain STRABAG Joint Venture	1
Bethell Group	1	GMI Construction Group	2	MJ Gleeson	1	Stepnell	1
BGEN	1	GRAHAM Group	3	Modus	1	Structure Tone	2
Blue Sky Building	1	Ground Control	1	Morgan Sindall	17	Taziker	1
Bouygues UK	1	HG Construction	1	Morris Homes	2	The Sirius Group	1
Bowmer and Kirkland	4	Higgins Partnerships	2	MPB Structures	1	Tilbury Douglas	11
BW: Workplace Experts	1	Hill Group UK	4	Multiplex	1	Torsion Construction	1
Bywater	1	HMH Civils	1	Murphy	1	Triton Construction	1
Caddick Construction	2	J Coffey Group	1	Neilcott Construction	2	VINCI Construction UK	3
Careys	2	Jackson Civil Engineering	3	Network Plus	1	Vistry Group	2
Coinford	1	John Henry Group	1	Nevada Construction	1	VolkerLaser	1
Colas	1	John Sisk & Son	8	NG Bailey	1	Wates Group	4
Colemans	1	Keepmoat Homes	1	Octavius Infrastructure	1	Wentworth	1
Collins Construction	2	Keltbray	2	OCU	1	Winvic Construction	1

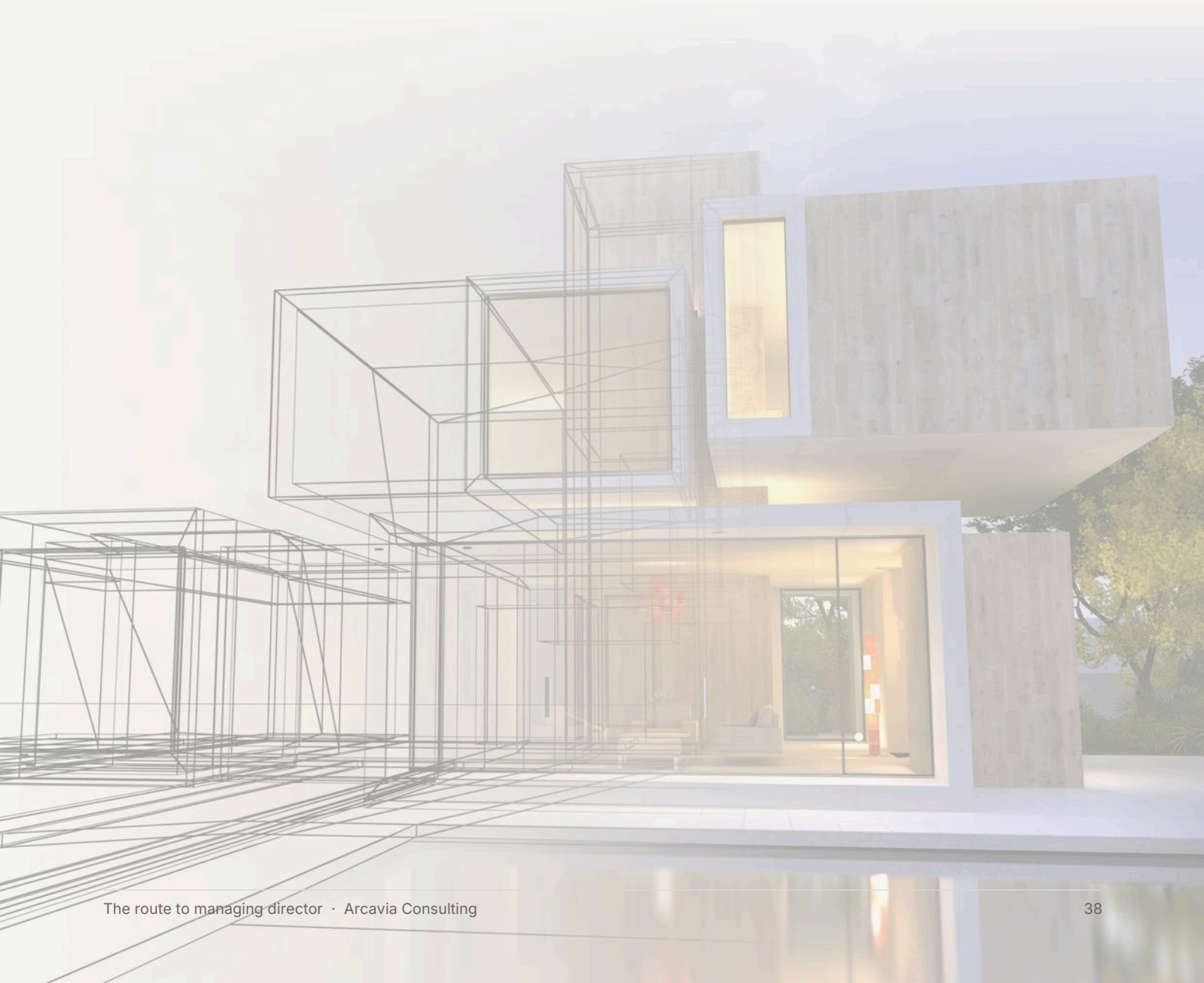
SECTION 07

Key findings

01 The 244 directors and MDs work across 108 businesses, from national contractors to regional builders, civils specialists and housing partnerships.

02 Five businesses account for 70 of them, led by Kier and Morgan Sindall, reflecting the regional and divisional leadership structures that national contractors run.

03 67 businesses appear once, often firms where the managing director runs the whole company.



METHODOLOGY

How this was built

Arcavia's own research, read career by career.

We built a career record for each of 249 senior leaders in UK contracting and read every one individually rather than sampling.

THE FIELD

244 directors and MDs at 108 businesses

Regional, divisional and area directors, managing directors and chief executives at UK contractors and specialist businesses, identified in October 2026. 5 of 249 profiles could not be read. A large sample of UK contracting leadership, not a complete count.

MILESTONES

First directorship and first MD title

A first directorship is the first title containing Director, leaving out associate, assistant, deputy, project, programme, bid, design and non-executive directors, since a project director at a contractor is a senior delivery grade rather than a board role. An MD title counts as a directorship. The MD milestone is the first managing director (including regional, divisional and joint), chief executive or president title.

TIMING

Career length and time at the business

Career length runs from the start of the earliest role on record, ignoring holiday, student and placement jobs, to the start of the milestone role. Time at the business is the unbroken run at the same employer up to the appointment. Timing figures use the 216 careers recorded from before the first directorship and the 105 recorded from before the first MD title.

ROUTE

Promotion or move

An internal promotion is one where the role immediately before was at the same business. Employer names are consolidated first, so a renamed or restructured business, such as Interserve to Tilbury Douglas or ENGIE to Equans, is not read as a move. Side roles (non-executive, trustee, governor, board member, consultant) are left out.

EDUCATION

Highest qualification and subject

Bachelor's, master's, MBA, doctorate and postgraduate diploma count as degrees. A university course with no stated award, and executive programmes, are shown separately. Subject is that of the first qualification after school. A degree taken while working is one finished after the first job on record.

AGE

Estimated from education dates

A full-time first degree is taken to start at 18, or failing that secondary school at 11, which dates 102 of the 244. Ages are reported only in aggregate, and generations are compared only over a window every member has completed.

Notes on the figures

- Career records are as the individuals keep them. Where a profile begins at director level the person is left out of the timing and route figures, and a title that states no function is left unclassified. No pay data is used, and no demographic data beyond the estimated ages is used or inferred. Analysis by Arcavia Consulting, October 2026.

Arcavia Consulting

ABOUT US

The hires that move the business

Arcavia Consulting is a specialist talent partner to the design and construction market across the UK, Europe and the United States, covering project and delivery, commercial, work winning, planning, and design and strategic leadership. We are a search business rather than a database business: every mandate is run exclusively, with a named partner on the work from briefing through to placement.

WHY WE RUN ANALYSIS LIKE THIS

SUCCESSION IS PLANNED ON INSTINCT

Most boards have a view of who their next managing director could be. Checking that view against how the role is actually reached across the market is the simplest way to widen the list before it narrows.

MAPPED, NOT LISTED

Every search opens with a map of the market rather than a shortlist pulled from a database, which is why work of this kind is part of the day job.

THE WORKING IS YOURS

The workbook behind this report is available to anyone who would find it useful, classifications and all.

Planning a managing director or board-level hire? Let's scope it together.

George Dobbins, Managing Partner · george@arcaviaconsulting.com arcaviaconsulting.com