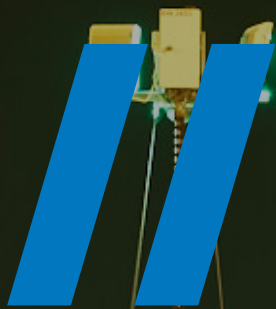




BauWatch



**20
25**

BauWatch Crime Report UK

**Delayed, Over Budget,
and Under Attack**



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Executive Summary

UK Construction Sites Combat Rising Crime with Technology

The UK is facing a construction crisis, with rising site crimes harming housing plans as well as energy and industry transformation. Across Europe, crime on construction sites is not only on the rise, but is also becoming increasingly professional, organised and sophisticated. The economic impact is significant – recent statistics from insurer Allianz Cornhill indicated that theft alone costs the UK building industry £800M a year. **The BauWatch Crime Report 2025** now confirms a dramatic change in the nature and impact of criminal activities targeting construction projects. At the same time, our study highlights a worrying trend that goes far beyond individual thefts or isolated incidents.

In the UK, construction site crime is intensifying, driven by a combination of organised crime and a strong black market for stolen goods. 67%

of British respondents observed an increase in construction site crime, 10 percentage points more than the European average. Worryingly, nearly half of respondents (49%) reported being offered “protection”, a clear sign that criminal intimidation is a growing threat.

Despite these challenges, UK construction companies are leading Europe in technology adoption. 48% of UK respondents use fixed CCTV systems, nearly double the European average, and 31% employ CCTV towers. However, the sophistication of criminal methods is also growing, including the use of drones and cyberattacks, which one in five respondents report as a growing threat. Workers are particularly vulnerable – 33% have had to personally replace stolen equipment, a rate significantly above the EU average.

UK Study Findings

- **Strong rise in site crime** – 67% report an increase (10 percentage points above EU average).
- **Protection rackets** – 49% offered “protection” (+12pp) and 27% have admitted paying.
- **Active stolen goods market** – 31% say stolen goods circulate “often” (+11pp).
- **Personal financial impact** – 33% of workers had to pay for replacements (+15pp).
- **Technology-based solutions** – 48% use fixed CCTV (+22pp above EU) and 31% use towers.

One in four British construction projects delayed by crime lose between three and four weeks, which can have a significant financial impact not only on the companies involved, but also on the entire supply chain, public infrastructure programmes and residential construction projects.

The analysis conducted for this report identifies six key trends shaping the current state of construction site crime. These include –

- **Focus on critical infrastructure**
- **Criminals using advanced technologies**
- **Organised criminal networks involved**
- **Seasonal crime peaks in winter**
- **Economic impact of project delays due to crime**
- **Rising crime rates across Europe**

Each of these trends highlights that construction site crime is no longer a niche problem limited to individual construction companies or local incidents, but a nation- and Europe-wide phenomenon with significant economic implications.



"The findings of our report are a wake-up call for the construction industry and policymakers. Crime on construction sites is not a sporadic nuisance, but a systematic challenge with serious economic consequences. Innovative security solutions are essential to protect projects, workers and future infrastructure."

– **Mim Mogul**, Managing Director UK & Ireland

Continental challenge

The Europe-wide study provides an overview of regional differences in construction crime rates. Austria (71%) and France (71%) have the highest increases. The United Kingdom is just behind with 67%, while Italy (44%) and Poland (34%) show lower but notable growth rates. The data indicates that construction site crime is a widespread issue, necessitating coordinated action, information sharing, and improved protective measures.

A threat to image, wallet and security

The survey highlights the impacts of theft and vandalism. 42% said the project was delayed, 33% reported stolen material needed replacement, with 33% saying employees had to buy replacements themselves. Besides material losses, crime damages a company's image (18%) and can lead to job losses (23%).

Ultimately, the evidence is clear. Crime on construction sites is no longer an isolated operational risk but has become a significant economic problem. It delays projects that are crucial for housing construction, the modernisation of critical infrastructure and energy transition. Furthermore, it places a burden on public finances, affects insurance costs and jeopardises strategic goals in the areas of climate, connectivity and digitalisation by delaying or threatening necessary infrastructure projects.

Increasingly sophisticated techniques

Construction crime is becoming more sophisticated, with 63% of respondents noting an increase in professional tactics like hacking security systems, using drones, or cloning digital access credentials. Traditional security measures are now seen as inadequate, highlighting the need for early security planning, smarter surveillance technologies, and targeted staff training.

Why this study's findings are important for you

The BauWatch Crime Report 2025 provides a data-driven perspective on where, how, and why construction-site crime is accelerating. By translating hundreds of data points into clear, actionable insights, the report empowers you to harden sites, protect teams, and keep schedules and budgets – on track. Every measure you adopt today does more than secure a single project – it keeps the homes, infrastructure, and clean-energy systems that Europe's future prosperity depends on moving forward. In short, acting on these findings safeguards your business and the economic, social, and climate goals.

Critical Infrastructure at Risk

Construction site crime is becoming a major economic issue, especially for critical infrastructure projects. These include energy systems such as power plants, electrical grids, and renewable energy farms, telecommunications networks (such as mobile towers and data centres), and essential services like water supply, healthcare, and transportation.

Four Reasons Why Construction Site Crime Threatens Infrastructure Projects



Rising Threat
Energy transition, telecommunications, and public works projects are increasingly targeted by organised crime.



Crime Surge
Among all countries surveyed, 70.3% of respondents working on critical infrastructure projects report a rise in criminal activity, particularly in remote locations like wind farms and solar parks.



Serious Impact
Small tools and power tools (52%), copper (48%) and cable (33%) are the most common goods stolen at construction sites in the UK, stalling energy and telecom projects and slowing the push for climate neutrality, reliable connectivity, and modern infrastructure.



Rising Costs
Security measures like reinforced storage and 24/7 monitoring are becoming essential, impacting project budgets.

Delays on construction and infrastructure projects reverberate far beyond the job-site, slowing energy transition, connectivity, and logistics networks. Safeguarding critical infrastructure is not just a construction issue – it is a societal imperative. Therefore, it requires an integrated approach combining physical and digital security, along with industry-wide cooperation. Failure to address this could impact future development in critical areas for global competitiveness.

Construction Crime Goes High-Tech

Construction crime is becoming more advanced, with 63% of British respondents noticing increasing sophistication. A significant 84% of offenders are now seen as professional or somewhat professional, using cutting-edge methods like:

- Drones for surveillance (21%)
- Hacking into security systems (28%)
- Cloning or hacking of digital access credentials (22%)

Traditional security measures are quickly becoming outdated. That's why it's critical for construction companies to act now. Without evolving security approaches, you might risk falling behind in the battle against increasingly tech-savvy criminals. As these threats grow more sophisticated, companies must invest in specialised expertise and advanced systems to protect valuable assets, ensure project continuity, and prevent costly delays. Adapting now is essential to stay ahead in this fast-paced technological arms race.



Organised Networks Drive Crime Sophistication

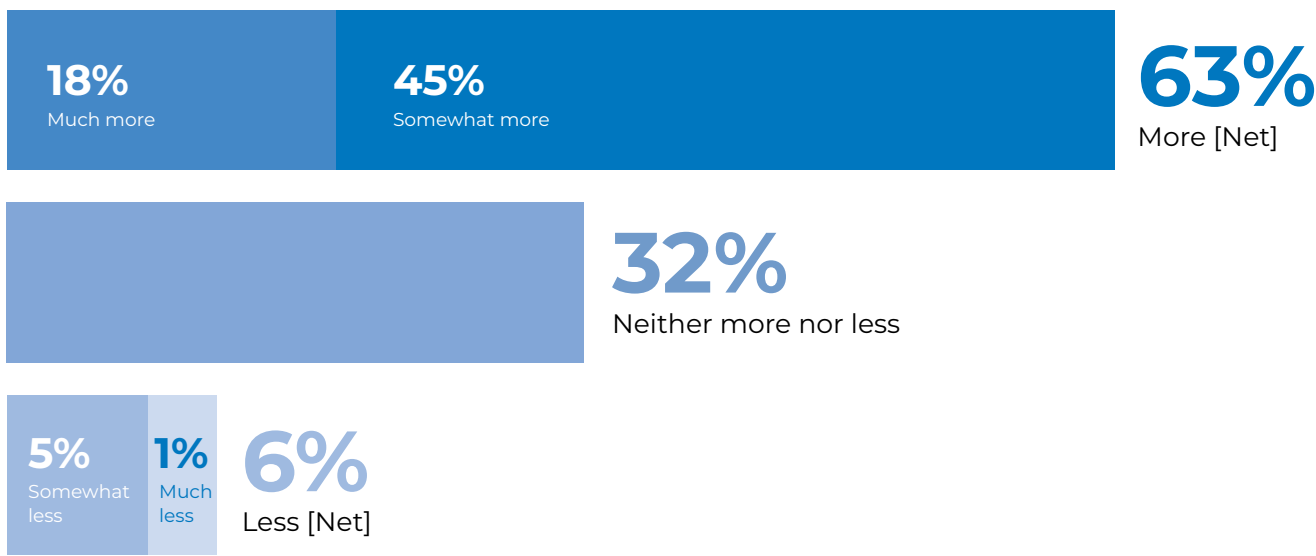
Organised crime is becoming a major driver of construction site crime. Nearly two thirds (60%) of the increase in criminal activity is now driven by coordinated criminal operations and networks. In some areas companies are facing serious pressure.



Around one in six construction site crimes across Europe is linked to organised crime.

Construction firms are now grappling with tough decisions. Paying for protection doesn't just inflate project costs and trigger delays – it also funnels cash straight into organised-crime coffers, perpetuating the very threat it is meant to avert. Beyond the immediate hit to timelines and budgets, such payments expose companies to legal risk and raise serious ethical questions about enabling criminal enterprises. Companies need to address this developing issue to avoid further implications.

Based on your experience of construction crime in recent years, is it becoming more or less sophisticated?



Seasonal Crime Peaks in Winter

Construction crime isn't just getting more sophisticated. Clear seasonal patterns have emerged, with theft and break-ins spiking sharply during the colder months. In fact, almost two thirds (64%) have reported a noticeable rise in criminal activity during winter. The reasons are clear - longer dark hours , emptier construction sites around the holidays, and harsher weather make regular security patrols more difficult. Criminals are aware of this and exploit it.

At the same time, however, it is useful information for construction companies. Instead of being caught off guard, firms can take proactive steps to strengthen their defences when it matters most. Seasonal security adjustments are no longer optional, they are a necessity. This means you should

- Increase lighting and surveillance coverage as daylight hours shrink
- Reinforce site access points and material storage areas
- Schedule frequent security checks, especially over holiday periods
- Launch preventive awareness campaigns before the high-risk season begins

Longer nights are coming – every year without fail – and with them, heightened risk. Companies that act early and adapt their security strategies to the season will be far better positioned to protect their sites and their workers, minimize losses, and keep projects on track.

Crime-Related Delays Impact Projects

Construction crime isn't just a nuisance, but it's becoming a major economic burden. Four in ten construction projects have faced delays due to theft or security incidents. On average, these setbacks add one to four weeks to project timelines, creating a ripple effect that stretches far beyond the construction site.

42%

of projects experienced delays due to theft or security incidents

1-4

One to four weeks are the typical delay caused by crime

33%

of projects exceeded their budgets due to crime-related issues

Beyond direct losses, companies are also feeling the pressure through higher insurance premiums and bigger investments in site security.

The financial fallout doesn't stop with construction firms. Delays and rising costs ultimately feed into higher housing prices, steeper infrastructure expenses, and increased burdens for taxpayers.

For construction companies tackling site crime isn't just about protecting materials; it's about protecting project timelines, budgets, and long-term affordability. In the longer term, such measures will also benefit society as a whole.

Construction Crime Rising Across Europe

Construction crime is on the rise across nearly all of Europe. In fact, nearly 60% of respondents reported an increase in criminal activity at their sites, making it clear that this is no isolated problem. This continent-wide trend warrants the attention of all stakeholders.

Some regional insights



Highest increases reported in Austria (71%) and France (71%)



Lower, but still significant, rises seen in Italy (44%) and Poland (34%)

Among British respondents, the figure is 67%.

While the overall trend is consistent, the intensity of crime varies between countries, showing that local factors still play a role. But one thing is clear - no country is immune.

Tackling this growing threat requires more than isolated efforts. It calls for **stronger cross-border collaboration, sharing of best practices, and coordinated security strategies**. As crime networks operate internationally, the construction industry must respond with the same level of cooperation and agility

In your opinion, has construction site crime increased or decreased in the past year?

	TOTAL	The Netherlands	Germany	Spain	France	Great Britain	Italy	Poland	Ireland	Belgium	Austria
Increased [Net]	57%	59%	64% ↑	58%	71% ↑	67% ↑	44% ↓	34% ↓	52%	63%	71%
Significantly increased	18%	14%	25% ↑	21%	29% ↑	17%	11% ↓	9% ↓	11% ↓	18%	24%
Somewhat increased	39%	45%	39%	37%	42%	50% ↑	33% ↓	25% ↓	41%	45%	47%
Stayed the same	33%	33%	30%	34%	24% ↓	27% ↓	44% ↑	39% ↑	32%	33%	27%
Somewhat decreased	8%	7%	4% ↓	6%	5%	5% ↓	8%	19% ↑	13% ↑	4%	2%
Significantly decreased	3%	3%	1%	2%	0% ↓	1%	4%	8% ↑	4%	1%	0%
Decreased [Net]	10%	10%	5% ↓	8%	5% ↓	6% ↓	12%	27% ↑	17%	5% ↓	2% ↓



Security Solutions and Best Practices

Smarter Protection for Smarter Projects

Keeping construction sites secure is easier and cheaper when you act early, plan smartly, and combine strong physical deterrents with team awareness. From mobile camera towers to flexible risk strategies, smart security makes all the difference.



Protecting a construction site is much easier than dealing with the aftermath of a crime – and visible deterrents remain among the most effective tools available. Our survey shows that fixed CCTV systems (48%), CCTV towers (31%), warning signs (45%), and alarms (41%) are the most frequently deployed measures to prevent theft and vandalism in the UK. However, the recent rise in the sophistication of crimes, along with increased activity from organised networks, highlights the need to elevate site security through flexible and reliable solutions such as live monitoring systems and modern surveillance technologies.



At BauWatch, we believe early security planning is essential. Every project should start with a comprehensive risk assessment. Visible solutions like mobile camera towers and sturdy perimeter fences can deter crime before it even happens. Meanwhile, emerging technologies like smart surveillance systems, AI-driven analytics, and remote monitoring provide powerful, cost-effective ways to protect valuable assets, even on tight budgets.



Technology alone isn't enough though. Overall sensitisation for the topic, clear communication and regular training are essential for generating and maintaining security awareness. Standardised site inductions, training materials, and safety briefings ensure workers understand their roles in site protection. Simple practices like removing keys from machinery, locking tools securely, and closing gates can prevent incidents. Keeping security providers informed about on-site changes is also crucial to avoid false alarms and vulnerabilities.



Investing in security is investing in project success. Cutting corners to save money can lead to much higher costs later, financially and reputationally. Construction security should be seen as an insurance policy – it protects materials, equipment, and people. And because every project is different, flexibility is key. Regular threat assessments, tailored to project phases and local conditions (like upcoming holidays), are critical. A simple traffic light system, highlighting phases of higher risk, helps teams stay alert when it matters most.

Six Quick Tips for Construction Site Security

1. **Use visible deterrents early** - Fences, camera towers, warning signs.
2. **Start with budget and project planning phase** - Don't leave it for later phases.
3. **Train and involve your teams** - Awareness is your first line of defense.
4. **Stay flexible** - Risk levels change with seasons, project phases, and local events.
5. **Communicate clearly** - Update all site workers and security partners when procedures change.
6. **Invest wisely** - Security costs upfront can save huge sums down the road.

Survey Results

From Winter Peaks to Drone Surveillance - Inside the Evolving World of Construction Theft

The BauWatch Crime Report 2025 survey was conducted in March and April 2025 by market research institute OnePoll. The sample consisted of 3,900 professionals in the construction industry. The respondents come from Germany, Austria, Italy, Great Britain, Spain, France, Belgium, Poland, the Netherlands and Ireland. The industries covered are Commercial Construction (42%), Commercial Real-Estate Management (6%), Energy (12%), Homebuilders and Renovation (34%), Infrastructure (5%), Commercial Manager (9%) and Contracts Manager (6%).



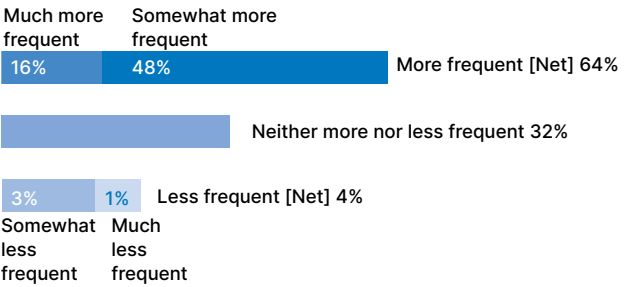
What, if any, are the most common items stolen from construction sites in your experience?

	%
Copper	48%
Small tools, power tools and handheld equipment (e.g., drills, levelling tools)	52%
Cables and cable drums	33%
Fuel	23%
Steel	21%
Pipework/ducting	22%
Personal effects (e.g., phones, PPE)	20%
Timber	22%
Bricks or blocks, roofing tiles	26%
Household appliances (e.g., boiler) and fixtures and fittings (e.g., bath, curtain rails)	19%
Heavy machinery (e.g., digger)	16%
Vehicles (e.g., vans or cars)	12%
Other	1%
Not sure/none in particular	0%
N/A – I have never experienced this	3%

In which, if any, of the following ways has construction crime impacted a project/work that you were doing?

	%
Material substitutions had to be made	33%
The project was delayed	42%
The project went over budget	33%
Workers had to replace their personal equipment	33%
Negatively impacted company reputation	18%
People lost work because of the incident	23%
People were harmed physically or mentally by the crime	16%
The project was unable to continue	14%
None of the above	4%

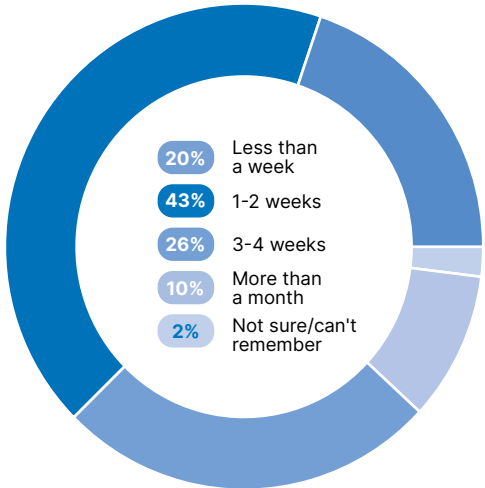
In your experience of construction crime (theft and trespassing), is it more or less frequent in autumn and winter due to longer evenings?



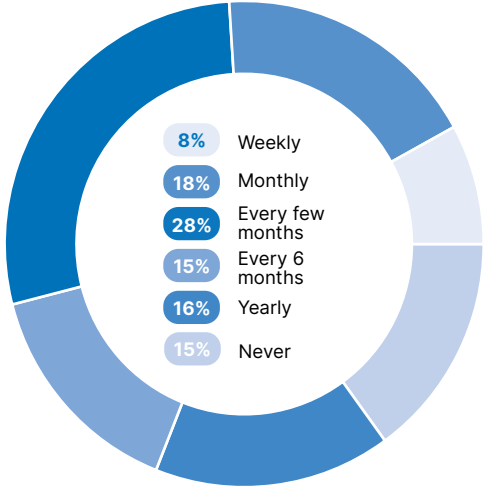
In your experience, in which ways is construction crime becoming more sophisticated?

	%
More coordinated and organised operations	32%
More stealthy tactics	37%
Organised networks	28%
Insider-assisted crimes	25%
Diversified crimes	22%
Hacking or disabling of security systems	28%
Drones used for surveillance or reconnaissance	21%
Cyberattacks on construction firms	20%
Cloning or hacking of digital access credentials	22%
AI-driven fraud or impersonation	13%
GPS jamming	13%
None of the above	1%

If a project you worked on has been delayed by crime, how long was it delayed by?



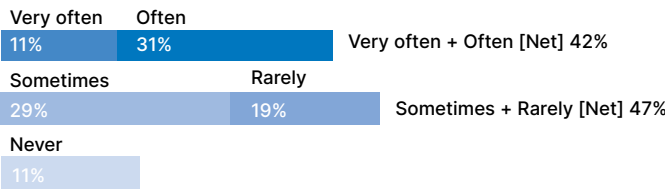
How often do you experience the following types of crime on sites you have worked on? - Theft



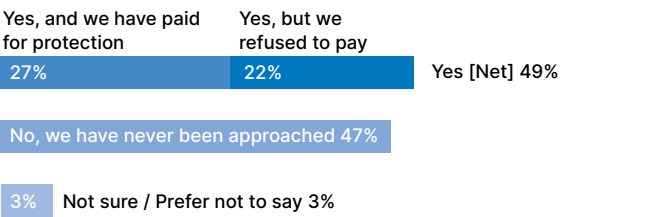
What, if any, security measures are used on sites that you work on?

	%
Perimeter fences	36%
Alarms	41%
Warning signs	45%
On-site guards/security personnel	36%
Fire safety	29%
Floodlights	30%
Fixed CCTV Systems	48%
Access Control (e.g., pass card entry, staffed gate for deliveries)	28%
Equipment inventory checks	27%
CCTV towers	31%
Other types of camera surveillance	17%
Hoarding systems	14%
Keyholding Response	15%
Digital inventory management (e.g., recording deliveries virtually)	13%
Guard dog	19%
Trackers	17%
PIDs/PODs modular systems	8%
Drones	7%
N/A – there are no security measures in place on sites I have worked on	2%

How often have you or other people on the sites you work on been approached by people wanting to 'sell things off the back of a lorry' (stolen material) for the project you're working on?



Have you ever been approached by individuals or groups offering "protection" for your construction site?



Conclusion and Future Outlook

Tackling the Growing Threat of Construction Site Crime

The construction industry is facing an escalating challenge with construction site crime. The trends discussed in our BauWatch Crime Report 2025 show that construction site crime is not just a localised issue but a growing international problem that impacts the entire industry. From increasingly sophisticated criminal activities to economic impacts that extend far beyond the construction sector, the need for robust security measures has never been more urgent.

As criminals become more organised and their methods more advanced, construction companies must act quickly to protect their projects and investments. Early planning and robust security measures are key to reducing risks and ensuring project timelines and budgets remain intact.

Trends and Challenges

Construction site crime in the UK is evolving rapidly, with several clear trends emerging from the BauWatch Crime Report 2025 -

- **Increasing digital sophistication among criminals** - Techniques such as hacking security systems, cloning digital access credentials, and using drones for surveillance are becoming more widespread.
- **Urban areas are hotspots** - Britain has the highest concentration of reported construction crimes in cities (52%), indicating criminals focus more on urban areas than in other regions.
- **Persistent material theft** - Copper and cable thefts remain especially prevalent.

Security Measures and Best Practices

In light of current trends, British construction companies are encouraged to:

- **Adopt a layered, technology-driven security approach**, incorporating CCTV, access control, and smart monitoring systems
- **Provide staff training** to help identify and respond appropriately to protection rackets and intimidation tactics
- **Collaborate with local authorities** by sharing intelligence on black-market activity and stolen goods
- **Support employees** with insurance coverage or reimbursement policies to address theft-related losses

Early planning and appropriate security measures can significantly reduce risks.

BauWatch supports Security Excellence


UK construction firms are increasingly investing in technology-driven security, but they must stay ahead of both traditional and digital threats. BauWatch's mobile surveillance and digital monitoring expertise can help companies create resilient, future-proof security strategies.

The bottom line - addressing construction site crime is not just about protecting property. It's about safeguarding the future of infrastructure development.

Let's build a secure future, together!



BauWatch

 The UK & Europe's leading provider of temporary, powered & solar CCTV solution hire. We take over all aspects of site security so that our customers do not have to.

Our customised solutions combine highly visible video technology that misses nothing on site, with an Alarm Response Centre that acts quickly and competently anytime, day or night.

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