

Diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI)

Diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) is a priority for RICS and the wider profession. The profession needs to attract and retain the best talent, regardless of gender, race, disability, neurodiversity, class or socio-economic background, religion, sexual orientation or age.

Firms and organisations with a diverse workforce have been shown to be more effective and efficient. Firms need staff who reflect the communities they serve if they are to be credible and understand the issues faced by those communities.

Diversity is a proven route to greater creativity and innovation, which are essential qualities in a fast-changing world.

RICS' [Rules of Conduct](#) require RICS-regulated firms and members to encourage diversity and inclusion. These pages are written with the help of RICS members and diversity, equity and inclusion experts to reflect good practice in encouraging diversity and inclusion.

With Gen Y and Gen Z now occupying over 60% of the workforce, failing to adapt to their needs will mean missing out on new talent and losing talent already in the business. Research by [Deloitte Digital](#) in 2023 outlines that young people coming into the workforce want to see more empathy from their bosses and more support for their mental health. However, creating a culture of inclusion and belonging positively impacts all generations and the overall talent pipeline.

What is diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI)?



DEI initiatives have been introduced across most industries and workplaces to increase the diversity of workforces. It creates a more equitable and inclusive environment for under-represented groups who may not have been afforded the same opportunities as the dominant groups. These initiatives often seek to challenge unconscious or implicit biases.

Diversity is who we are as humans. We are all diverse, from the colour of our skin to our education, from our religious beliefs to our value systems and so much more. Some aspects of our diversity are clearly visible while others are less obvious. Much of who we are as individuals is hidden below the surface.

Equity recognises that not all employees will have been given an equal chance either growing up or as they entered the workplace, while equality in the workplace provides employees with equal opportunities (one size fits all). Equity seeks to address that imbalance by ensuring a person has the right tools and support to fulfil their potential whatever their starting point.

Inclusion is part of a workplace's culture and is a choice to include or exclude people from conversations, projects or events. By taking positive inclusive actions we can make people comfortable so they can be their whole selves at work

Actions for firms of different sizes

Sole practitioners

- Think about how your offices could be made more accessible for visiting clients
- Incorporate different viewpoints into event planning, ensuring spaces are accessible – both online and offline – and welcoming to all
- If you are involved in any speaking engagements, ask about inclusion – is the speaking panel diverse, is the venue accessible?
- Consider how to make your website and other communications accessible to all prospective clients
- If you offer work experience, think about whether you could offer opportunities to people from different backgrounds
- When you are with others, challenge behaviour that is exclusionary
- Explore ways to diversify your supply chain and champion minority-owned businesses

Smaller firms with employees

- Think about how you recruit to attract a wider range of talent – consider where and how you advertise
- Write job descriptions and adverts to be inclusive
- Consider flexible working practices to attract and retain more talent
- Put in place policies covering: acceptable behaviour, parental leave and caring responsibilities, adjustments and well-being
- Create consistent onboarding processes
- Think about how you measure performance and reward it – does it exclude anyone?
- Ask staff about the culture of your company and your behaviour as a leader
- Organise staff events that everyone can attend and enjoy

Larger firms

- Leaders can welcome new starters with an email explaining the behaviours you value
- Consider reverse mentoring or coaching
- Look at ways you could remove bias from recruitment, using structured interviews and diverse hiring panels
- Collect data about the diversity of your workforce and use it to drive your DEI actions
- Publish appropriate diversity data and make commitments using recognised accreditations
- Support employee groups that support different communities
- Provide training for staff on your policies and inclusive practice

DEI guidance



Inclusive culture



Everyday life at work



Inclusive recruitment



Career progression and development



Inclusive policies and procedures



Inclusive spaces

Useful information

Risks

The absence of a robust DEI strategy can pose significant risks for organisations.

A lack of diversity in a business, particularly in leadership roles, can lead to a homogeneous and insular working environment where 'group think' stifles creativity and innovation. With an absence of diverse perspectives to call on, organisations may struggle to adapt to our increasingly dynamic and multicultural world. This, in turn, can result in talent attrition, employees from underrepresented groups may feel marginalised and undervalued, hindering a company's ability to attract top-tier talent, ultimately impacting its competitiveness.

Beyond the internal workforce dynamics, companies without a comprehensive DEI strategy may face reputational risks, as stakeholders and customers increasingly demand and expect social responsibility from businesses. Ultimately, failure to prioritise diversity and inclusion may limit a company's growth potential, hinder decision-making processes and compromise its standing in an evolving business landscape.

Advancing inclusion globally

Challenges faced by organisations and individuals will differ between countries, or even regions within countries, depending on historic, social and cultural norms and values.

As people and as businesses we can work together to respectfully build more inclusive workplaces, taking into account local norms, values and legal frameworks. The information in our guidance uses the UK's [Equality Act 2010](#) as its foundation. However, as a global organisation, we recognise that under different countries' legal frameworks some actions will be not possible to implement.

All members of RICS are held to account by RICS' Rules of Conduct wherever they work or practise. As stipulated in Rule 4, all RICS members should 'respect the rights of others and treat others with courtesy'. If we work collectively respecting and celebrating our differences, we can ensure surveying is a profession that is recognised globally for our inclusive practices.

Tools



RICS Podcast #72: The Rules of Conduct in a Global Context. [Spotify](#); [Apple Podcasts](#); [Google Podcasts](#)

Equality and anti-discrimination legislation

Equality and anti-discrimination laws exist in most countries, and while the content of these will vary, most aim to eliminate discrimination based on a range of protected characteristics.

The [UN international human rights legal framework](#) gives a good overview of the principles that aim to combat this discrimination. The Framework covers discrimination against indigenous people, [migrants](#), [minorities](#), people with disabilities, women, racial and religious discrimination, and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity.

It is your responsibility to comply with the law within your jurisdiction.

UK Equality Act

In the UK the [Equality Act 2010](#) is landmark legislation that revolutionised the approach to equality and anti-discrimination. The Act consolidated and replaced previous anti-discrimination laws, ensuring a cohesive legal framework to protect individuals from discrimination and promote equal opportunities.

The Act aims to eliminate discrimination based on a wide range of protected characteristics, including age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation. By covering these protected characteristics, the Equality Act 2010 seeks to create a fair and inclusive society where everyone is treated with dignity and respect, regardless of their personal attributes.

The Equality Act 2010 places obligations on employers, service providers and public authorities to promote equality and prevent discrimination. It requires them to make reasonable adjustments to accommodate the needs of individuals with disabilities and to actively work towards eliminating discriminatory practices.

Tools



UK Equality and Human Rights Commission [Equality Act guidance](#)



RICS Online Learning Academy: [Diversity and Inclusion](#)

Expert working group

RICS would like to thank everyone who contributed to this material:

Author: Kelly Canterford, Tigrou Consulting

James Brandon, CBRE

Chanelle Gray, Savills

Vanessa Curtis, CBRE

Elise Thompson, Vail Williams

Jen Lemen, Property Elite

Maria Wiedner, Cambridge RE Finance

Melanie Folkes-Mayers, Gerald Eve

Paula Dixon, VOA

Warren Stapley, Montagu Evans

William Kirkpatrick, Gerald Eve

Jennifer Offord, Homes England

Ally Reid, Landsec

Sarah Howie, Gerald Eve

Charlie Isaac, Gerald Eve

Will Bronze, Gerald Eve

Lillian Chandler, JLL

Anne-Lyse Raoul, JLL

We would also like to acknowledge the contributions of Gaynor Warren-Wright FRICS to this work prior to her passing in April 2023.

Delivering confidence

We are RICS. As a member-led chartered professional body working in the public interest, we uphold the highest technical and ethical standards.

We inspire professionalism, advance knowledge and support our members across global markets to make an effective contribution for the benefit of society. We independently regulate our members in the management of land, real estate, construction and infrastructure. Our work with others supports their professional practice and pioneers a natural and built environment that is sustainable, resilient and inclusive for all.

General enquiries
[**contactrics@rics.org**](mailto:contactrics@rics.org)

Candidate support
[**candidatesupport@rics.org**](mailto:candidatesupport@rics.org)



[rics.org](https://www.rics.org)