

REPORT

Women in surveying: insight report

July 2023



Women in surveying: insight report

July 2023



Published by the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors (RICS)

Parliament Square

London

SW1P 3AD

www.rics.org

No responsibility for loss or damage caused to any person acting or refraining from action as a result of the material included in this publication can be accepted by the authors or RICS.

ISBN 978 1 78321 501 0

© Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors (RICS) July 2023. Copyright in all or part of this publication rests with RICS. Save where and to the extent expressly permitted within this document, no part of this work may be reproduced or used in any form or by any means including graphic, electronic, or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, taping or web distribution, without the written permission of RICS or in line with the rules of an existing licence.

Contents

1 Introduction.....	1
2 RICS 2022 data on binary gender diversity.....	2
3 Women in the profession survey: background	8
4 Analysis.....	11
5 Conclusion.....	18
6 Further information.....	19
6.1 RICS regional events	19
6.2 Government initiatives and policies	19
6.3 Resources for UK employers.....	20
6.4 Additional resources.....	21



1 Introduction

Women in surveying and the wider built environment sector face recurring challenges throughout their careers due to:

- discrimination
- bias (whether unconscious or intentional) and
- inequity in opportunities and systemic practices.

This report analyses existing RICS membership data and the results of our flagship 2022 survey of women in the profession.

Our aim is to offer insights on why women are not progressing in their careers and remaining in the profession. This will enable individuals, teams and organisations to reflect and further examine their own behaviours, policies and practices and, more importantly, begin their journey in taking positive action to deliver change with lasting impact.

We acknowledge RICS' diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) journey and the need to look deeper into matters affecting women in the surveying profession, both regionally within the UK and Ireland as well as globally.

We need to gain a better understanding of how intersectionality, government laws, regulation and current events across the globe come into play.

Through improved member demographic data collection, we aim to more accurately identify and address diversity gaps within the profession.



2 RICS 2022 data on binary gender diversity

RICS was founded in London in 1868. At that time, the institution had 49 members, none of whom were women. In November 1922, RICS welcomed its first woman chartered surveyor, [Mrs Irene Barclay \(née Martin\)](#).

Our records show that representation of women has gradually increased over time, reaching 5% by 1990.

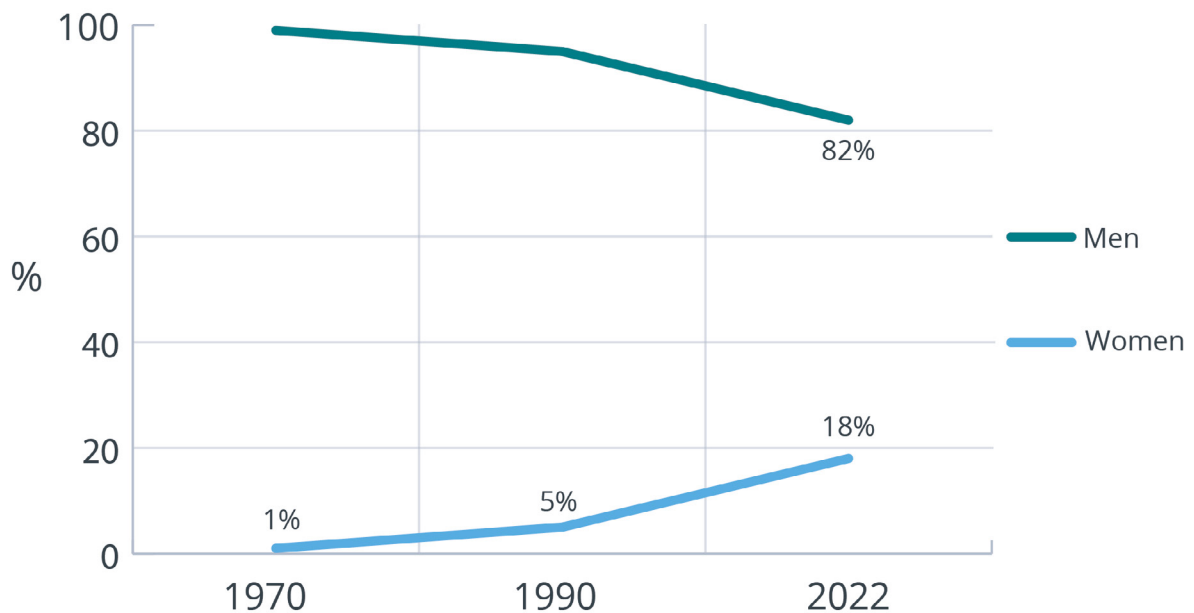


Figure 1: Proportion of women RICS members

This means that approximately 128 women surveyors obtained their RICS membership in the 20 years from 1970 to 1990, compared to nearly 3,147 men surveyors in the same period. From 1991 to 2011, roughly 753 women surveyors obtained their RICS membership, in contrast with approximately 6,784 men. Therefore, the rate at which women have been joining the membership has been significantly lower than that of men.



Based on data from February 2022, women represented only 18% of RICS' then 139,000 international professionals across 23 pathways.

The total number of women chartered surveyors varies across regions. In the UK and Ireland specifically, women represented only 17% of approximately 99,000 members – the largest regional membership. If we look at the different RICS member grades, representation is further disproportionate between them.

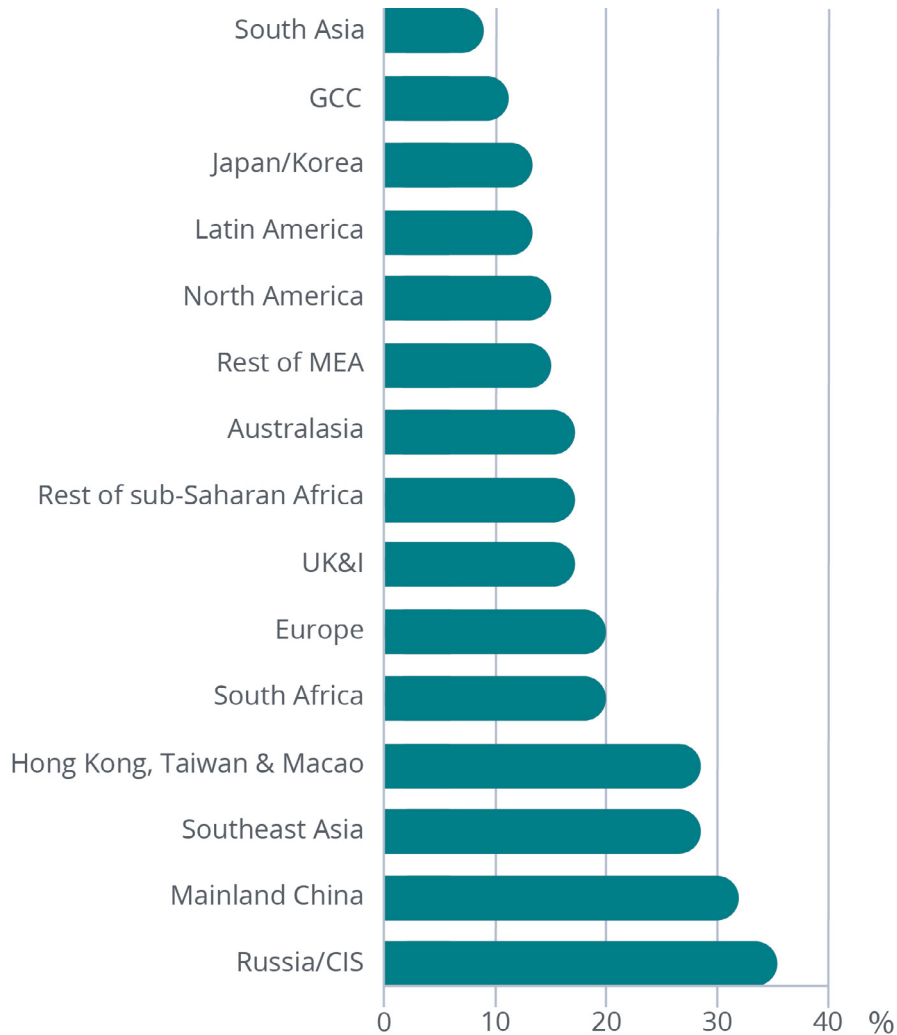


Figure 2: Women representation in RICS global membership.
(Source: RICS Global database, February 2022, c. 139,000 members)

The RICS membership is comprised of Associate (AssocRICS), Professional Members (MRICS), Fellows (FRICS) and Honorary Members. However, only MRICS and FRICS are chartered members, with FRICS being awarded to professionals who have demonstrated their individual professional achievements and stand out in the eyes of their peers, business and the public.

Looking at the whole of the global membership, although the majority of chartered members (both male and female) held MRICS statuses, only 4% of women members were Fellows in comparison to men at 16%.



Further insight is needed into why women are not pursuing FRICS status. We need to identify what RICS can do to encourage and inspire more women to apply for their fellowship, consequently serving as role models within the profession.

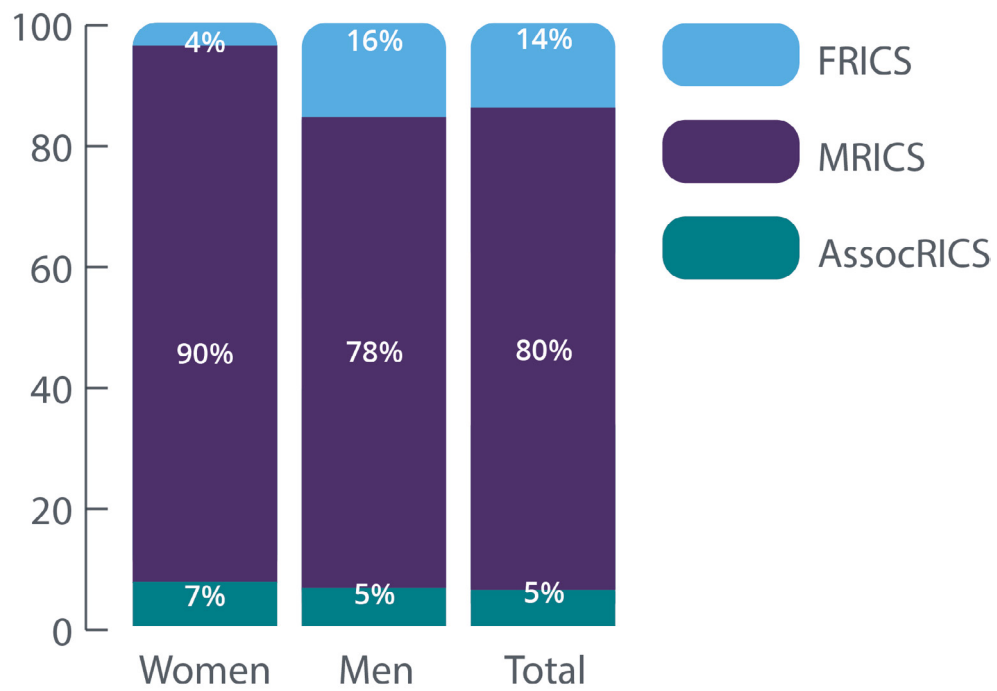


Figure 3: Gender by designation

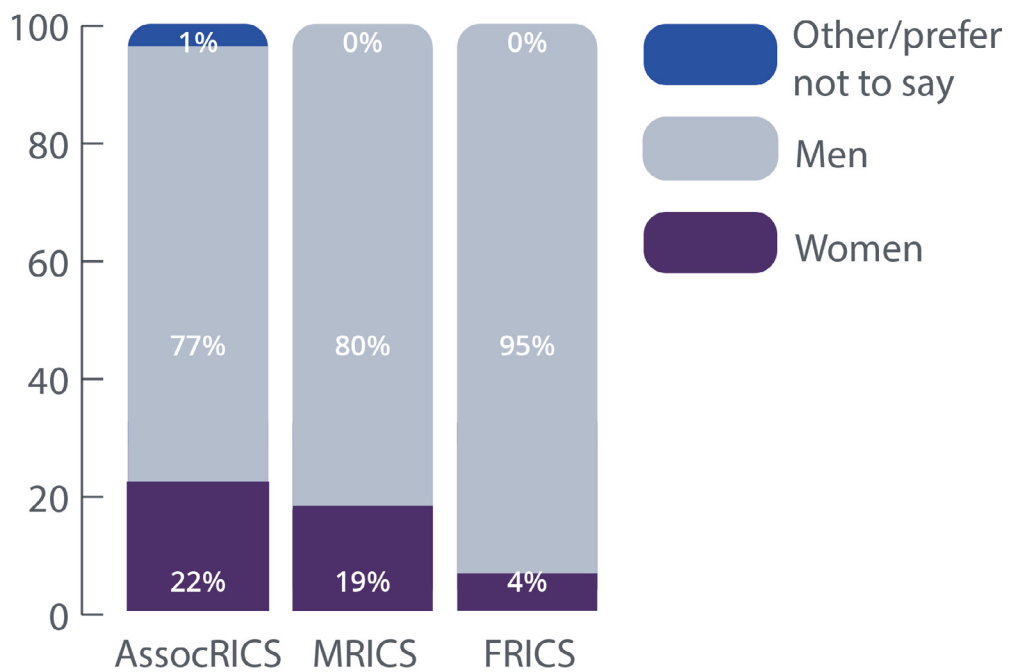


Figure 4: Designation by gender

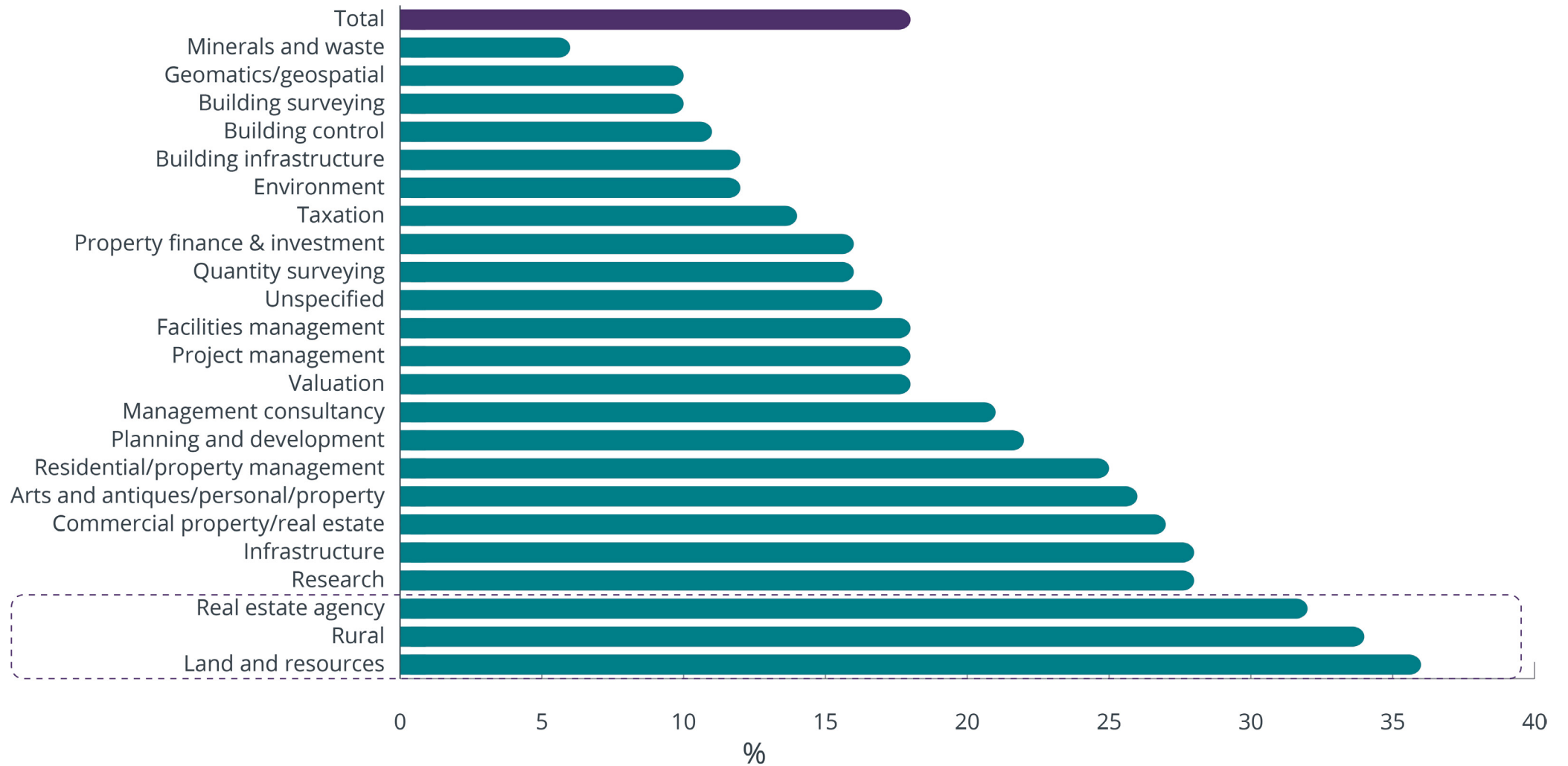


Figure 5: Percentage of women by qualification pathway

With 23 pathways, the surveying profession is extremely varied, yet binary gender representation differs greatly across each pathway. Land and resources has the greatest representation of women at 36%, compared to minerals and waste, which has the smallest representation at just 6%. This indicates the need for more targeted analysis and sector-specific strategies for improvement.

The average length of a woman's membership is 16 years, and the average age that women are leaving the membership is 47. However, male members are retaining their membership for an average of 28 years and are staying until 61 years of age. In order to retain women's talent and see their careers flourish, our industry must question why they are leaving the surveying profession or workforce much earlier than men.

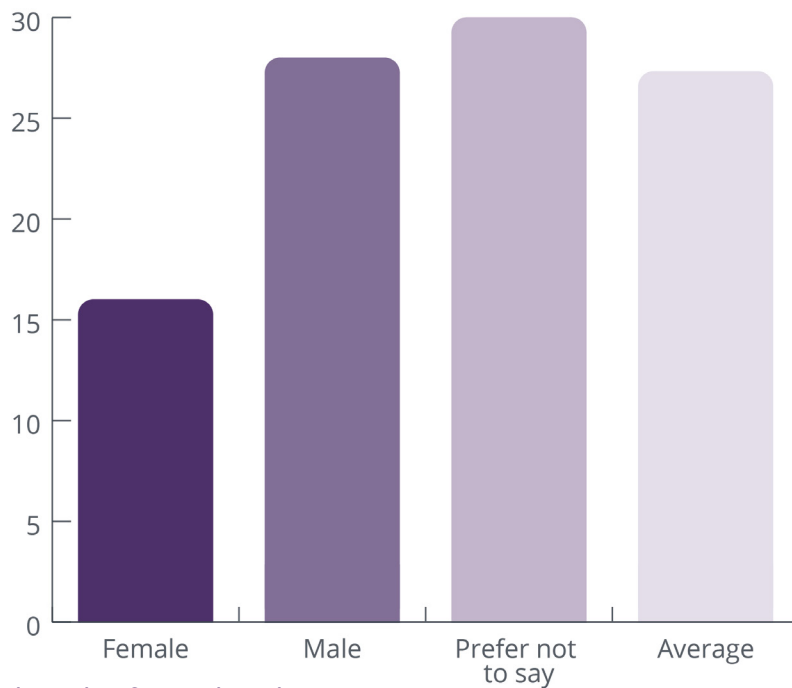


Figure 6: Average length of membership in years

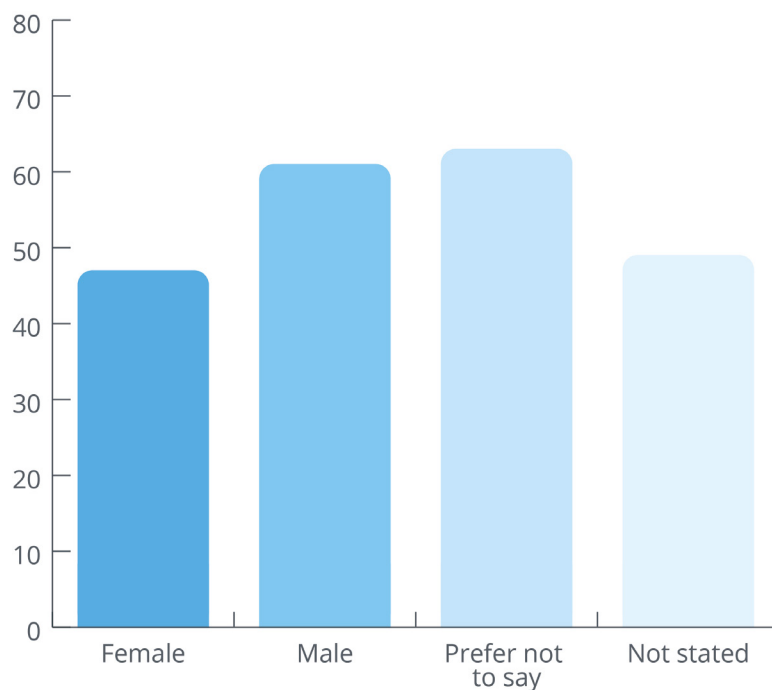
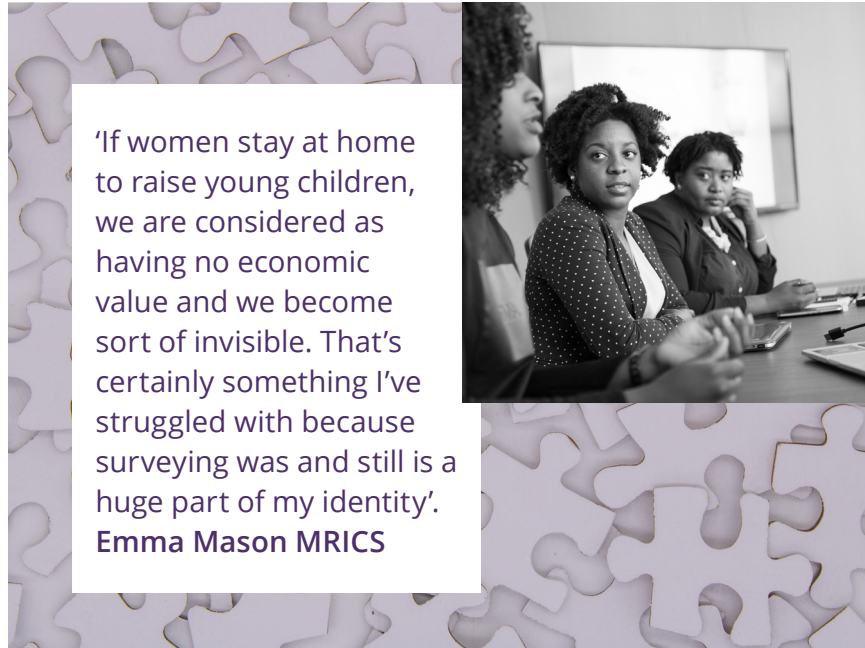


Figure 7: Average age that membership lapses



This underscores the challenges that organisations face in balancing boards and senior leadership teams, since women are leaving the membership as well as their careers, reducing the talent pool available to draw from. While we already know through existing surveys and other qualitative studies that inadequate and inequitable recruitment, development and promotion practices contribute to these losses, so does organisational culture and the impact of menopause, career breaks and caring responsibilities.



Figures 6 and 7 emphasise a priority area in need of more detailed insight: why are women leaving surveying specifically? Such insight would enable benchmarks to be set for organisations in the built and natural environment, which would improve culture and practices that support, encourage and enable women to stay in the profession and progress.

3 Women in the profession survey: background

In April 2022, RICS launched its very first survey focused on women in the profession.

Only 234 professionals took part globally, 79% of which were from the UK and Ireland and 73% from white ethnic backgrounds.

The low percentage of participation from members globally and members belonging to ethnic minority groups is reflective of RICS' strong focus in the UK and Ireland and the lack of diversity within the membership. This stresses the need for:

- greater engagement from RICS outside of the UK and Ireland and
- increased DEI efforts at a global level.

The membership levels reflect the 2022 RICS data on binary gender diversity explored in [section 2](#) of this report. Of the participants, 56% confirmed they were members of RICS. Age groups and relationship statuses give us greater insight into the UK and Ireland member demographic.

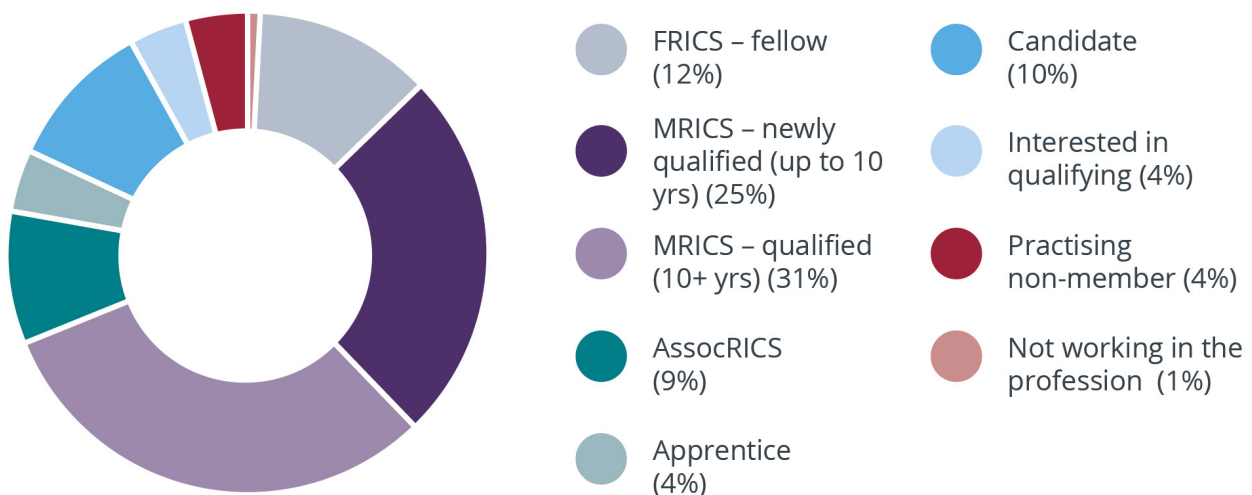


Figure 8: Member status of participants

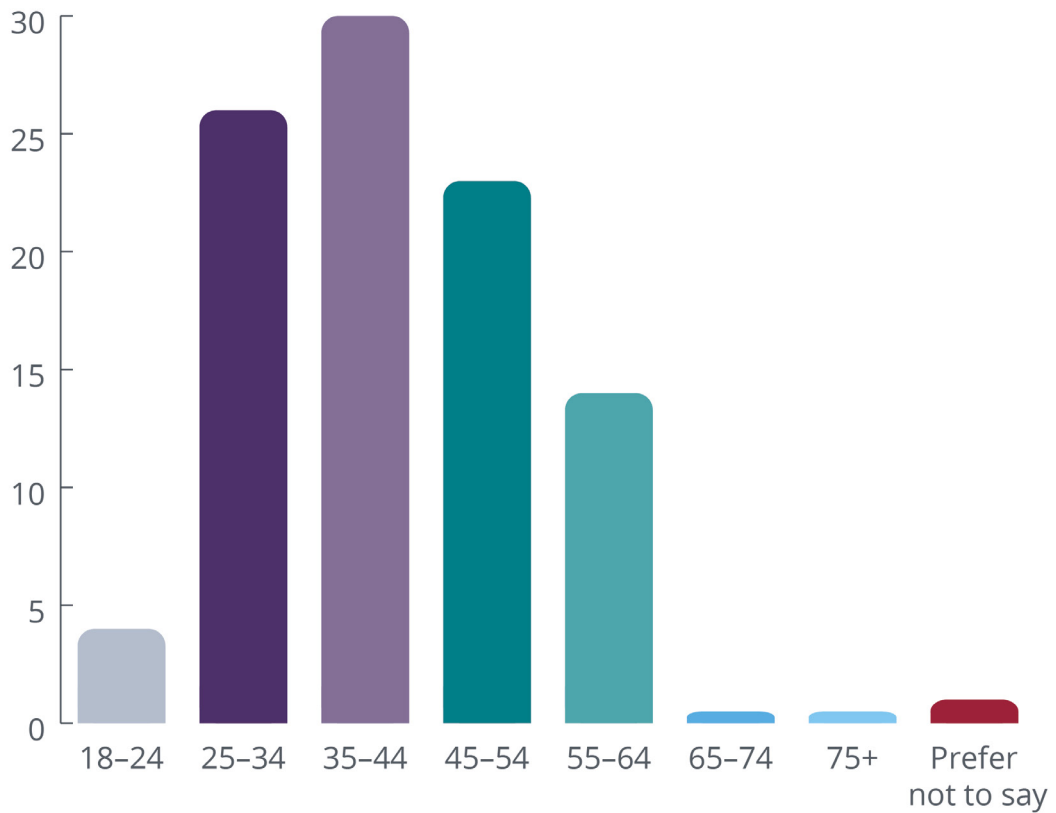


Figure 9: Age of participants

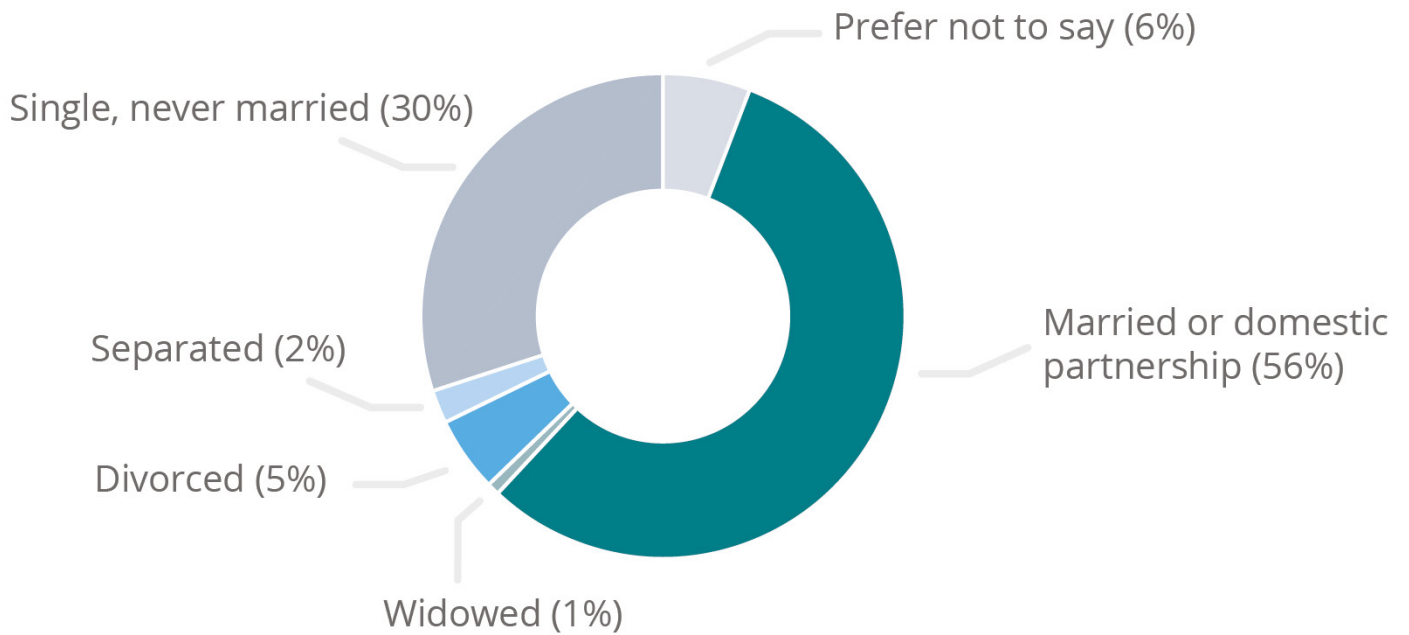


Figure 10: Relationship status of participants

In terms of the pipeline into the profession, 4% were interested in qualifying, 10% were candidates and 4% were apprentices.

It is also important to note that 1% were not working in the profession and 4% were practising non-members. As we obtain a greater number of professionals participating in the survey and continue to get more robust responses, we will be able to compare sentiments of members to non-members.

Most respondents confirmed being in full-time employment (87.36%), working for a large or very large firm (57%), and being mature professionals, with 62% stating a minimum of 11 years in the surveying profession.

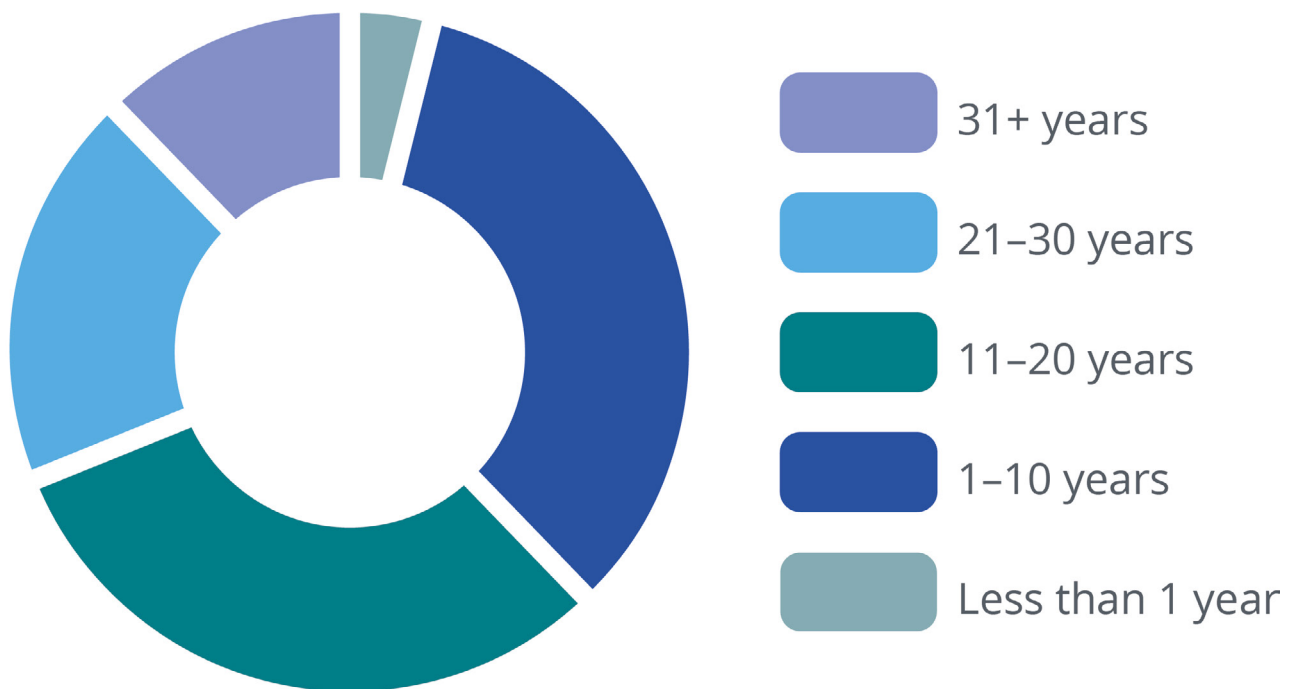


Figure 11: Longevity of participants in the surveying profession

Furthermore, only 39% were in first-level or mid-level management, and a smaller percentage, at 28%, were in senior or executive-level roles.

When looking at primary professional groups, approximately 61% were practising in commercial property, building surveying, or quantity surveying and construction. Rural, building control and minerals and waste management only had 1% or 2% of respondents confirming them as their primary professional group.

Of the total respondents, 3% were between the ages of 18 and 24, 27% were between 25 and 34, 66% were between 35 and 64, and only 4% were 65 years or older.



We hope to see greater participation and representation in future surveys and in our demographic data collection so that we can clearly identify gaps and areas of need and better understand the intersectional needs beyond binary gender.

4 Analysis

Most respondents became aware of surveying as a profession from a family member or friend, at work or by doing their own research. When participants were asked, on a scale from 1-10, how likely they were to recommend the profession to women who are considering being surveyors (where 10 is extremely likely), the response was positive, with an average of 7.5.

The words or phrases they would use to describe a career in surveying to someone outside of the profession were also positive; for example, 'varied', 'requires good people skills' and 'good opportunities'. However, among the words and phrases provided, one pertinent observation was made: 'male dominated'.

We know of the profession's pronounced disparity in gender diversity, and that women's membership lapses considerably sooner than that of men. Bearing this in mind, and bearing in mind that the majority of respondents are not classified as new professionals, we will explore the top three areas participants selected as the most important to deliver improved support for women in surveying.

Figure 12 indicates that, despite women being in the profession long enough to move up the career ladder while also being in full-time roles, not enough women are taking up leading roles or receiving equal pay. In addition, those with caring responsibilities are not being given greater flexibility in working hours.



The most common experience among participants who are parents was lack of flexible working options after returning to work and missed promotions or missed opportunities that they would have otherwise been considered for, among other reasons.

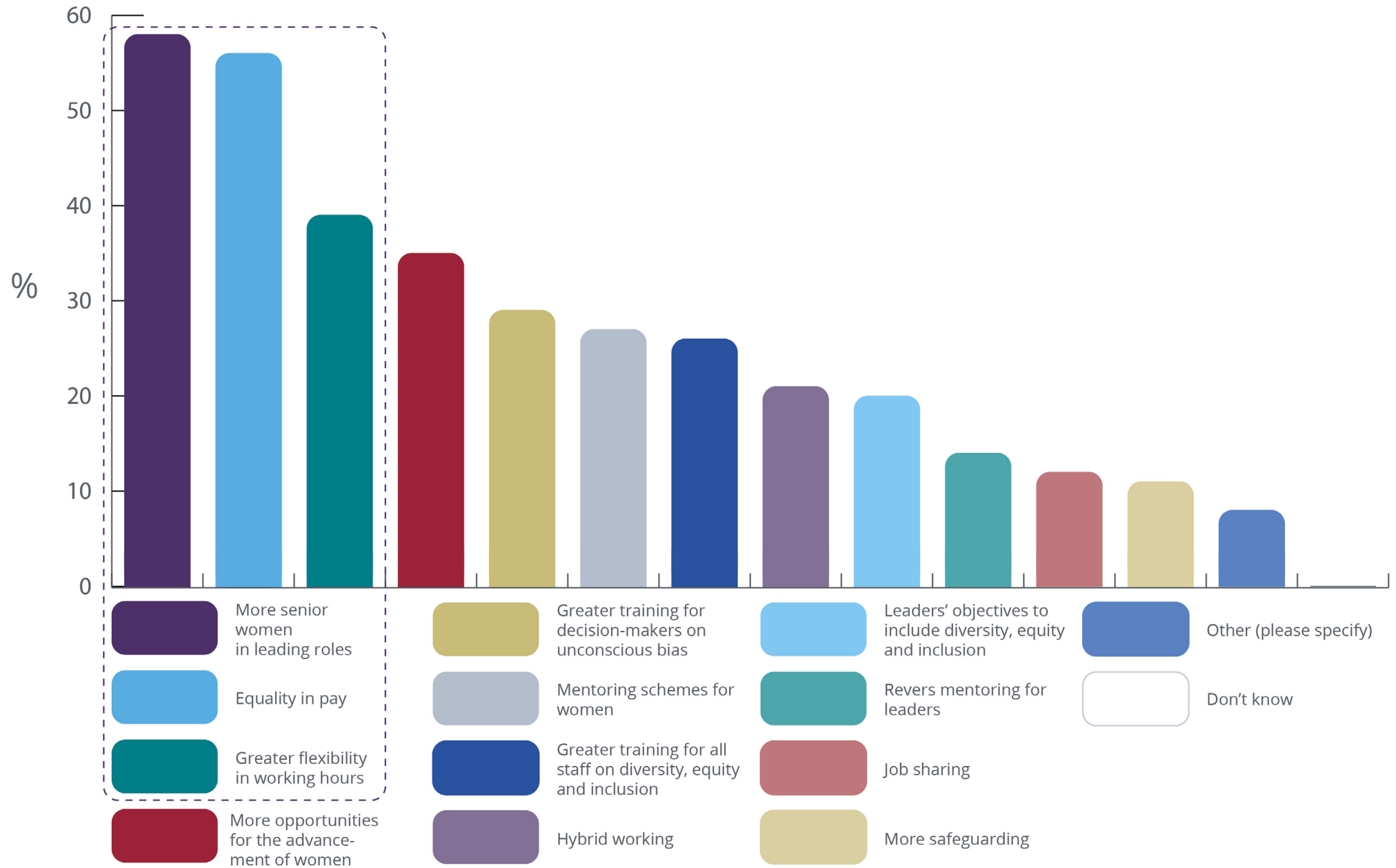


Figure 12: In your opinion, what are the three most important areas to deliver improved support for women in surveying?

When it came to sentiment at work, a total of 69% of participants said that they only sometimes felt valued or never felt valued in performing their roles at work, and 63% felt that women either had to work harder to prove themselves to achieve recognition in their workplace or that it did not matter how hard women work as there is no equal recognition.



Lack of recognition of skills, culture driving imposter syndrome and unconscious bias were the most voted for factors as barriers faced by women in developing their careers as surveyors. Lack of access to flexible or remote working and workplace harassment were also stated.

These topics suggest the possibility that employees will leave their organisations. When we asked participants if they had ever considered leaving the profession, more than half said they did so frequently or occasionally.

Some initiatives that participants would also like to see outside of equal pay and opportunities and improved support for those with children or returning to work included:

- access to the profession
- networking groups or mentoring for women in the profession and
- training for decision-makers to create positive change for women in the profession.

When considering their organisation, 30% somewhat agreed that there is recognition and awareness of the challenges women face, and 34.48% somewhat agreed that there were equal opportunities for progression. Only 39.57% of participants somewhat agreed that their leaders' objectives included diversity and inclusion. More than half of respondents said their organisation do not have a strategy to attract more women into the profession, and nearly 25% did not know.

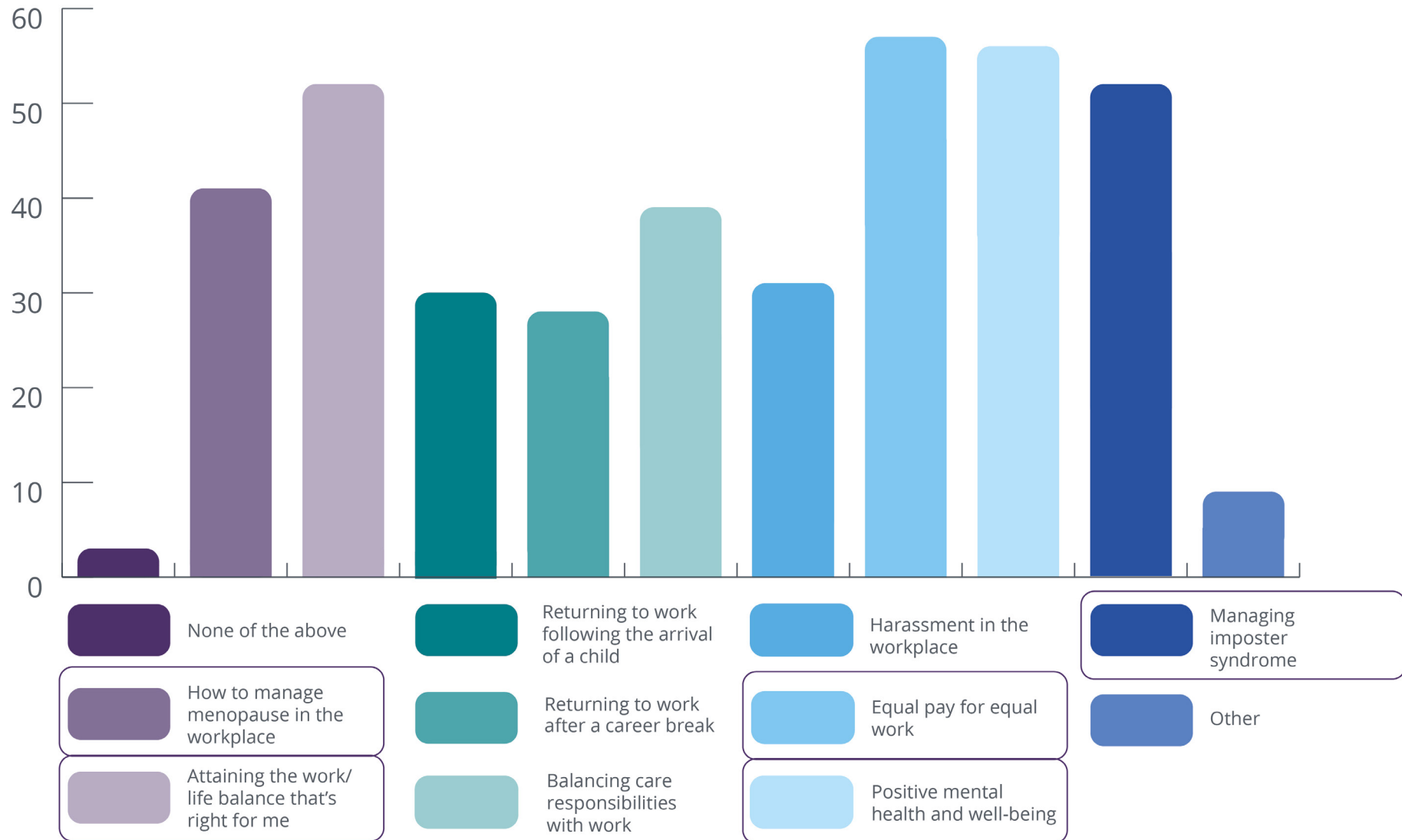


Figure 13: Topics impacting women



Without robust DEI strategies in place with clear benchmarks and targets, alongside a strong stance from leaders to advance inclusion for women surveyors, these findings will continue to persist. This drives the need for RICS to further explore the types of policy, practices and procedures in place for the profession.

Some of the initiatives that RICS is working on to drive greater diversity in the next generation of surveyors that respondents valued the most include:

- having greater diversity across global advisory boards, leaders' forums, governing council and the management board and
- providing women's networking and mentorship opportunities for young and aspiring professionals.



The most common initiatives being delivered in respondents' organisations to attract women to the profession included:

- networking or mentoring schemes for women
- training to improve diversity and to support women in the profession and
- having an outreach programme through schools, colleges and universities.

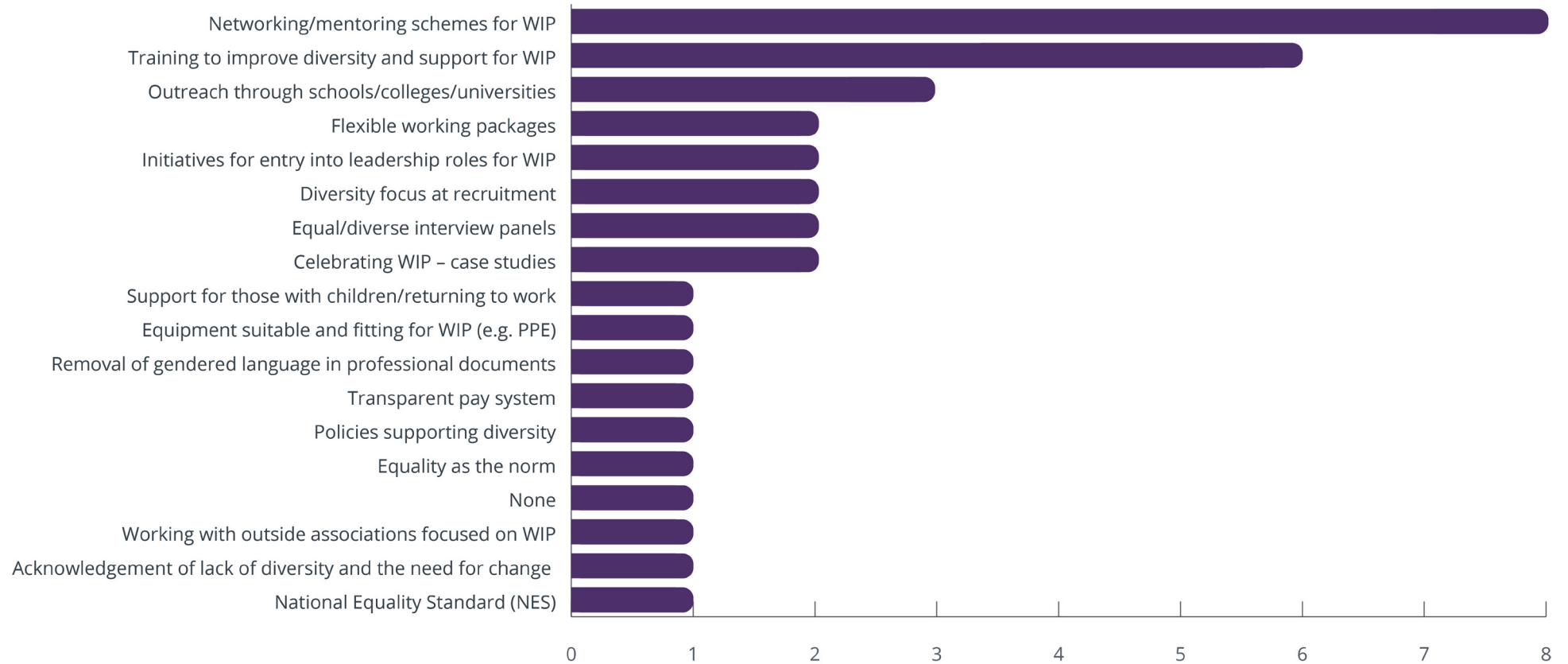


Figure 14: Please tell us about the initiatives being delivered in your organisation to attract women to the profession
(Note: WIP stands for women in the profession)

Figure 14 suggests that organisations are taking some steps to create a more inclusive work environment for women; however, without a robust strategy in place with realistic targets, intentional leadership, consistency, resources, engagement, commitment and accountability from employees at all levels of an organisation, progress will not be seen or felt.



While approximately 42% of respondents were not parents, lack of flexible working options after returning to work and missed promotions or opportunities that they would have otherwise been considered for were the main experiences of those who went on maternity or parental leave. The third highest response was 'none of the above', therefore driving the need for further analysis.

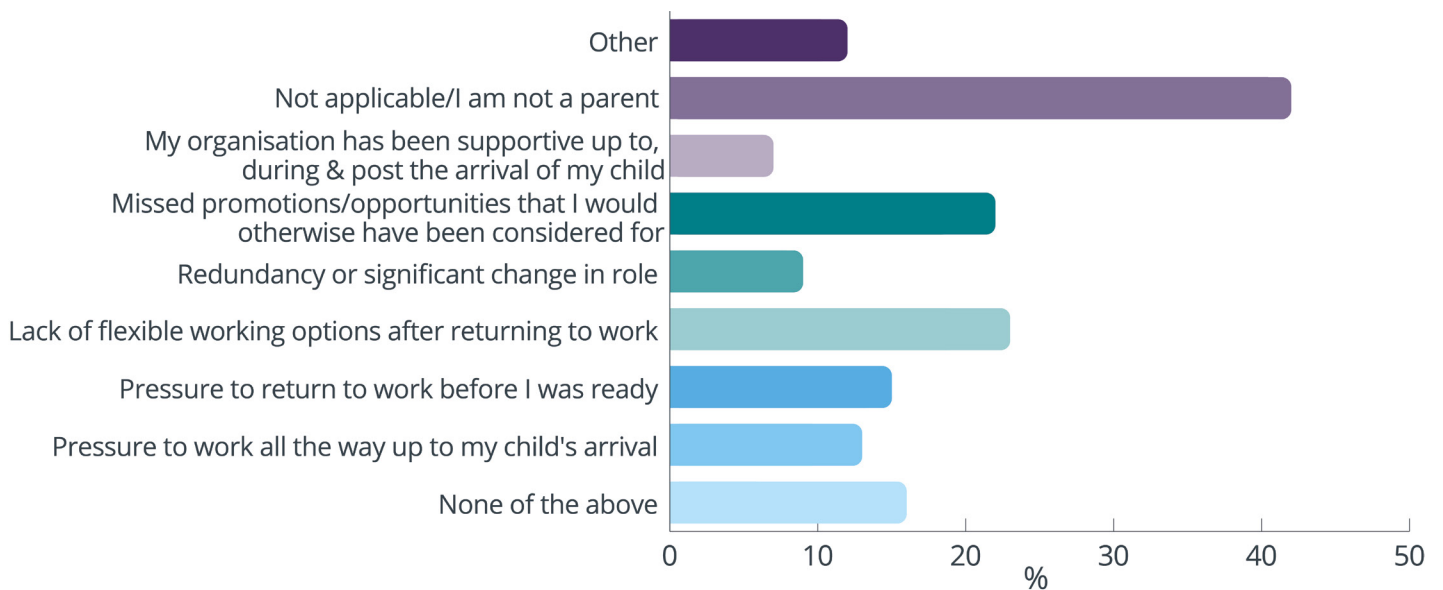


Figure 15: If you are a parent, did you experience any of the following regarding maternity or parental leave?

5 Conclusion

Although the natural and built environment sector has seen improvements over the years in terms of attitudes and behaviours towards women in the profession, as well as in practices and policies that impact them, there is still a long way to go in transforming the culture of the profession so that women are not only represented across all levels of organisations, but so they have equitable support, opportunities and pay.

RICS acknowledges the need for global insight and engagement. We invite and encourage women surveyors from all regions to share their experiences and participate in our annual Women in the Profession survey so that we can accurately identify areas of need and the gaps that exist and address them properly.



To participate in the 2023 survey, please visit [Women in the Profession](#) or scan the QR code.

The survey will be open until 30 September 2023.

6 Further information

For more information or to participate in our activities, please visit our [DEI hub](#).

Recent RICS events regarding women in the profession are listed below, along with relevant policies, initiatives and legislation.

6.1 RICS regional events

- [International Women’s Day 2022 at RICS \(8 March 2022\)](#): as part of Women’s History Month, RICS hosted a hybrid event in its historic London offices.
- [Advancing inclusion for women surveyors event at RICS HQ \(7 December 2022\)](#): momentum continued at our second event of the year focusing on advancing inclusion for women surveyors. Former RICS President Clement Lau opened the event, followed by RICS’ new Head of DEI, Sybil Taunton, who spoke on progress made and priorities moving forward.
- [International Women’s Day: advancing inclusion for women surveyors \(8 March 2023\)](#): in celebration of International Women’s Day, we welcomed professionals in the industry to join us for an afternoon of discussions on the ways in which we can all serve as more engaged allies and help create a more robust culture of inclusion.



6.2 Government initiatives and policies

[The Parliament’s fight for gender equality in the EU | News | European Parliament \(europa.eu\)](#)

6.3 Resources for UK employers

6.3.1 UK government policy/legislation

- [Equal Pay Act 1970 \(repealed\)](#): this was a landmark moment in the fight for equal pay in the UK. It was the first piece of UK legislation that enshrined the right to pay equality between women and men. Due to this legislation, an individual could claim equal pay if they were:
 - employed in like work (work that is the same or broadly similar)
 - in work rated as equivalent (i.e. work that was rated as equivalent under a job evaluation scheme) or
 - in work of equal value (work that requires the same levels of effort, skill, knowledge and responsibility).
- [Sex Discrimination Act 1975 \(repealed\)](#): this came into force along with the *Equal Pay Act 1970* on 29 December 1975. It protected employees and workers from less favourable treatment as a result of their sex and rendered sex discrimination and discrimination on the grounds of marriage as unlawful.
- [Trade Union Reform and Employment Rights Act 1993](#): this guarantees every working woman the right to maternity leave. Initially, all pregnant women were granted the right to a statutory maternity leave of 14 weeks; this was extended to 29 weeks for women who had worked for two years for the same employer prior to the eleventh week before the expected week of childbirth. During their maternity leave, all pregnant women are protected from having their jobs terminated or from other forms of discrimination related to their pregnancy.
- [Equality Act 2010](#): this brought together previously existing equalities legislation, strengthening and simplifying equalities law. Prior to this, equalities law was spread out across over 100 pieces of legislation. This Act covers protected characteristics including sex, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, and sets out that people should not be discriminated against due to their sex in employment, when seeking employment or when engaged in occupations or activities related to work.

6.3.2 Initiatives on gender equality

- **International Women's Day**: this was marked for the first time by the United Nations (UN) in 1975; it was then formalised as an annual event by the UN General Assembly in December 1977.

- **Gender pay gap reporting:** from 2017, UK employers with a headcount of 250 or more must comply with regulations on gender pay gap reporting; they must report their information via the gender pay gap service. Employers can also publish a discretionary action plan or supporting narrative alongside their report. See [RICS' Gender pay gap report](#).
- **Shared parental leave:** this was introduced to UK workplaces in April 2015 and allows parents to share the leave that accrues following the birth or adoption of a child.
- **Sustainable development goals (SDGs):** at the UN in 2015, the UK committed to delivering 17 SDGs by 2030, including goal 5, which is to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls. You can find further information on how the government is supporting the delivery of these goals at [gov.uk](#).

6.4 Additional resources

- [2023 Report on gender equality in the EU](#)
- [European Institute for Gender Equality](#)
- [Why does gender inclusion matter to the construction industry? | shine4women.com](#)
- [Women in CRE strike a new balance three years into the pandemic | Commercial Observer](#)

Delivering confidence

We are RICS. Everything we do is designed to effect positive change in the built and natural environments. Through our respected global standards, leading professional progression and our trusted data and insight, we promote and enforce the highest professional standards in the development and management of land, real estate, construction and infrastructure. Our work with others provides a foundation for confident markets, pioneers better places to live and work and is a force for positive social impact.

Americas, Europe, Middle East & Africa
aemea@rics.org

Asia Pacific
apac@rics.org

United Kingdom & Ireland
contactrics@rics.org



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