

REPORT

Surveying skills

October 2026

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Insights from members are the foundation of this report, and they add a richness to the findings. We want to keep this conversation with aspiring and existing members going, so please do [get in touch](#) if you'd like to discuss how we can address the skills gap and develop an education offer that reflects both the existing and emerging realities of practice.

For more details on the data explored here, please contact [Simon Rubinsohn](#) or [Kay Pitman](#).



Foreword by
Nick Maclean
FRICS OBE
RICS President

There's much to be optimistic about in surveying.

Wherever I go, surveyors are telling me the same thing. Whether it is candidates at the beginning of their careers or people with decades of experience, I hear a shared concern: we are all grappling with a world that is rapidly changing.

From the rise of artificial intelligence to geopolitical uncertainty and increasing costs, we are living through a time of transformation that will require us all to adapt to different ways of working and embrace new skills.

As President of RICS, I believe this skills research will play a vital role in helping our profession better understand where pressures are and how we can best prepare for the future with confidence.

Surveying is built on professional judgement, ethics and expertise. Those qualities are developed over many years through experience, curiosity and a willingness to keep learning. In a world where expectations and priorities are constantly shifting, a commitment to continuous development has never been more important.

Last year's report marked the beginning of a new conversation on skills. It is a dialogue that must continue, particularly given the impact this challenge is already having on capacity, costs and innovation.

Working alongside employers, educators, professional bodies and policymakers, we can find solutions and move forwards.

I talk to a great many people from all over the globe who, like me, are passionate about the built and natural environments. They relish the chance to work on impressive projects that make a tangible difference to society and the environment in the process. In turn, they benefit from a varied and rewarding career.

The challenges ahead are real, but so too are the opportunities. Surveying is one of the oldest professions in human history, we are experts at change.

If there is one message I would like the profession to reflect on, it is that our industry has never lost its appetite to learn, adapt and improve. Investing in our people, teams and profession today is the surest way to ensure surveying continues to make a positive difference into the future.

I encourage you to read this report and join the conversation.

Executive summary

Globally, over 50% of respondents describe the skills shortage as critical or moderate. We are now entering a pivotal moment shaped by technology and sustainability, one that requires collective action to meet the challenges that lie ahead.

Impact of skills shortage



Emerging skills

Data analytics, digital tools and advanced technologies

48%

Critical thinking and learning agility

47%

Communication, collaboration and stakeholder management

44%

Skills shortage drivers

60% Shortage of mid-career professionals

42% Shortage of early-career professionals/new entrants

41% Retention challenges

Key insights

- 1 The surveyor shortage is making it harder for the sector to meet demand, upskill staff and innovate – while contributing to higher costs – at a time when the delivery of affordable housing and infrastructure are global priorities.
- 2 Bringing new people into the profession remains a top priority. But what stands out for every region is the need to retain established professionals in the sector and support them to continually upskill.
- 3 AI and tech-related skills continue to be a priority for the majority of professionals. Surveying is now not just technical knowledge. Critical thinking, communication and stakeholder management are going to be increasingly important skills.

Introduction

Why do we need to consider the skills gap?

The built and natural environments account for more than 20% of global GDP on an annual basis, with the total value of real estate around the world approaching the \$400 trillion mark.

Surveyors play a critical role in supporting this valuable sector of the global economy, whether it is in the construction process, the valuation and oversight of this estate or the trading of some of these assets.

Last years' report highlighted long-standing challenges associated with an ageing workforce and insufficient new entrants, combined with a changing regulatory environment and ambitious national development targets for housing, infrastructure and climate resilience.

These factors, combined with rapidly changing technology, place skills-related pressure on land, real estate, construction and infrastructure sectors.

This is not only in terms of a shortage of people at the levels required to meet society's needs, but also changing the kinds of skills required by professionals already working in the industry.

In an environment where skills gaps have persisted for decades, pipeline issues extend beyond entry-level and early-career shortages, to mid-career and experienced professionals and those able to take on leadership roles. This has knock-on impacts on the ability of these new and mid-level managers to appropriately support early-career professionals.

The resulting self-perpetuating skills gap is one familiar to many working across key sectors of the economy, and puts greater importance on the performance of retention strategies among organisations in the sector.



The skills shortage is one of the defining structural challenges for the built environment. It

is no longer simply about replacing retiring professionals – it is about equipping the profession for an industry that is becoming more digital, more regulated, more sustainability-focused and more geopolitical.

For RICS, the challenge is not maintaining technical standards but ensuring members remain future-ready. Tomorrow's surveyor will be judged not only by technical accuracy, but by their ability to combine data, technology and professional judgement. We should be aware that if routine tasks become automated, trust, ethics and strategic advice become the profession's greatest value.

Susanne Eickermann-Riepe FRICS
RICS Senior Vice President

The changing landscape

Over the last 12 months, AI has rapidly advanced. RICS' most recent [AI in commercial property and construction report](#) reflects a 'profession still grappling with the implementation of a disruptive new technology'. For the sectors surveyed, organisations moved from planning to invest in AI in 2025, to starting investment and pilot testing of AI in their operations by 2026.

This rapid change not only requires individuals and organisations to develop competence in working responsibly with new technology, but also changes the dynamics of what surveyors spend their time on, the expectations from their clients and the subsequent key skills needed to continue to deliver projects in the public good.

Alongside AI, regulatory requirements associated with sustainability are continuing to place pressure on organisations to increase transparency and mandate sustainability reporting. Climate-related risks will continue to increase as climate change develops, requiring different skillsets from surveyors in understanding how this is developing and managing land, construction, real estate and infrastructure.

How it differs from 2025

Last year, RICS ran its first global skills survey to better understand where the pressure points were for shortages across the sector and how this was impacting on critical areas of work.

The 2025 survey highlighted a critical global skills shortage that has, along with other factors, affected the ability of organisations to take on new work. This has societal implications, where projects such as building new houses may become delayed.

This year's survey continues to track the high-level trends, including:

- the severity of skills shortages
- the subsequent impact on organisations
- the main drivers of skills gaps, and
- the priority and emerging skills that surveyors will need in the near future.

It also introduces several new questions, designed to better understand the barriers, to allow us to identify the most effective strategies to close skills gaps, address pipeline shortages and pinpoint the critical emerging skills and training needs among professionals.

Survey responses

The survey ran from June to August 2026, and was delivered in collaboration with RICS' research partner, Savanta. There were a total of 3,698 responses from professionals working across surveying disciplines around the world.

A further breakdown of respondent demographics is included in Appendix A.

Alongside the quantitative survey, 16 interviews and a small number of group discussions were held to gather qualitative insight into skills gaps. Commentary from these individuals is included throughout the report.

To ensure survey responses are representative of RICS' global membership, the data gathered and presented here has been weighted according to age, membership grade and region. An explanation of how this weighting affects the results is included in Appendix A.

Extent and impact of the skills gap

Figure 1 shows that just over half (54%) of respondents believe the skills shortage is either critical (severely impacting work) or moderate (providing challenge for businesses, albeit one that is manageable in the short-term).

Last year, a larger proportion of contributors (27%) indicated the impact was critical, while almost 60% described it as moderate.

However, comparisons with last year's results need to acknowledge that the question in 2025 was phrased slightly differently – specifically about the impact at an industry level, rather than organisation.

While it is possible that the slightly different questions explain the divergence, it is equally plausible that the challenging economic and industry environment in the run-up to and during the survey and field work have contributed to the lower percentages of critical and moderate.

This likely reflects the impact of the heightened geopolitical uncertainty, higher energy costs and rising bond yields on recruitment and retention plans and related skills requirements.

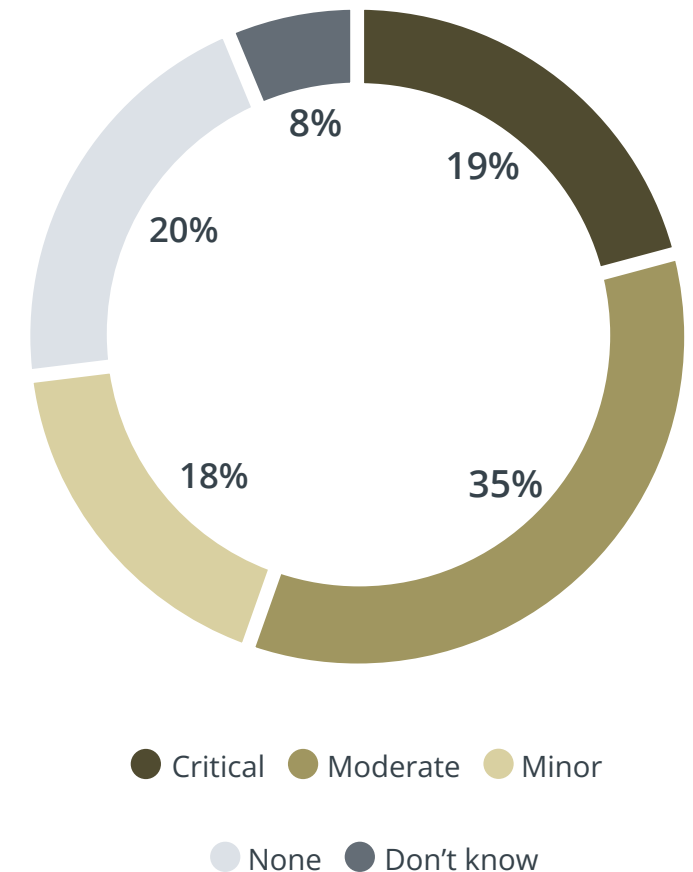


Figure 1: What impact, if any, are surveying skills shortages having on your organisation?

Reviewing the results by professional discipline shows the issue of shortages is not limited to specific parts of the profession. The highest shares reporting the skills shortage as either critical or moderate were building control, infrastructure, quantity surveying, project management and facilities management.

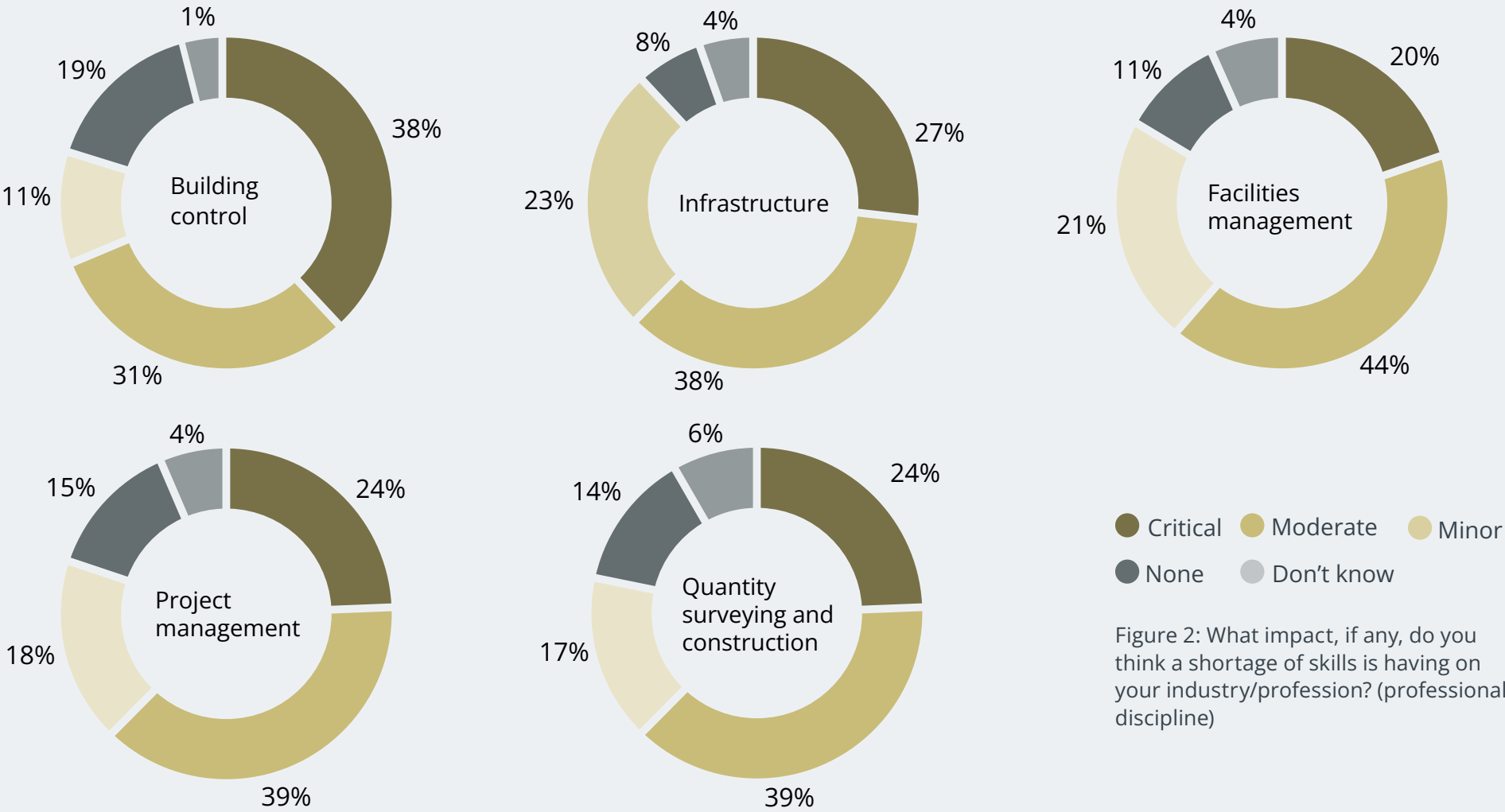


Figure 2: What impact, if any, do you think a shortage of skills is having on your industry/profession? (professional discipline)

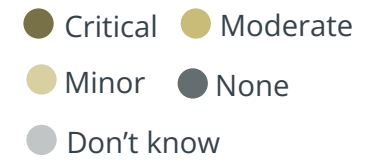
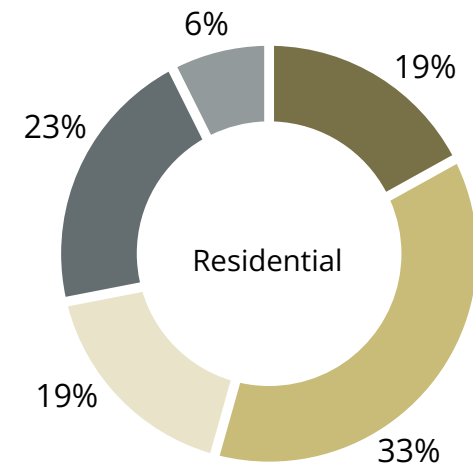
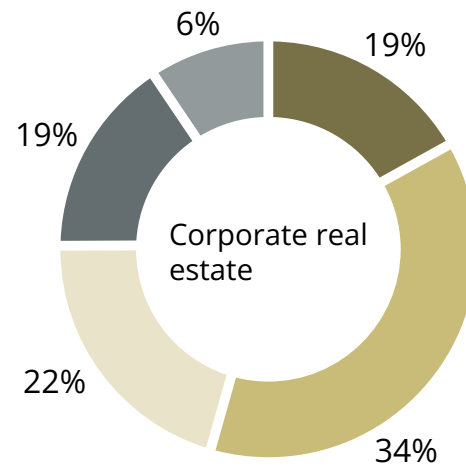
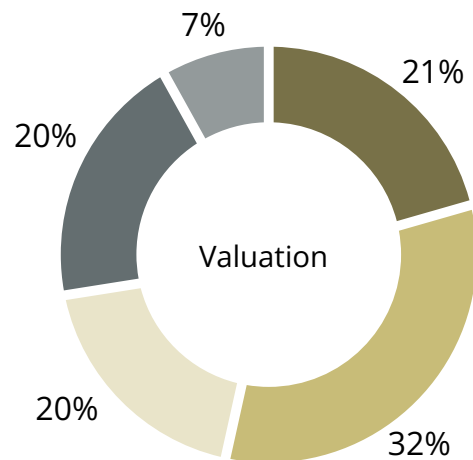
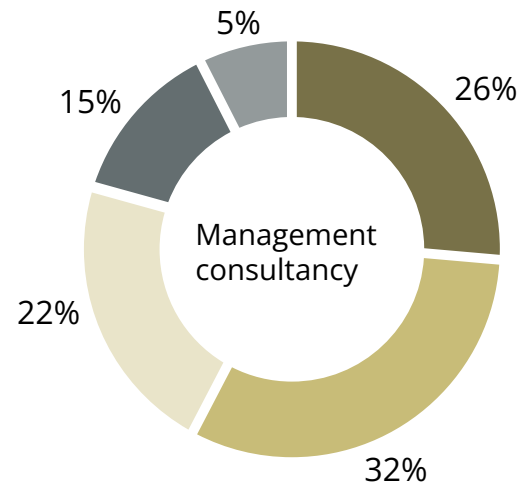
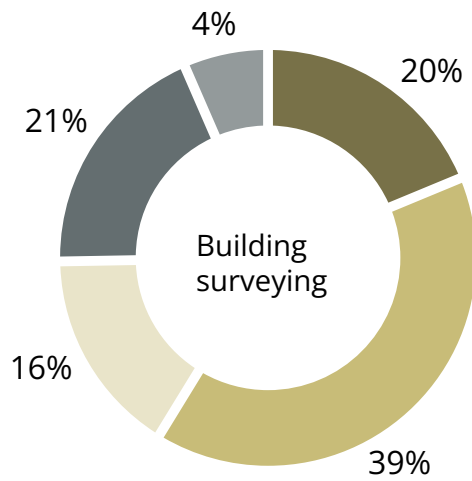


Figure 2 continued: What impact, if any, do you think a shortage of skills is having on your industry/profession? (professional discipline)



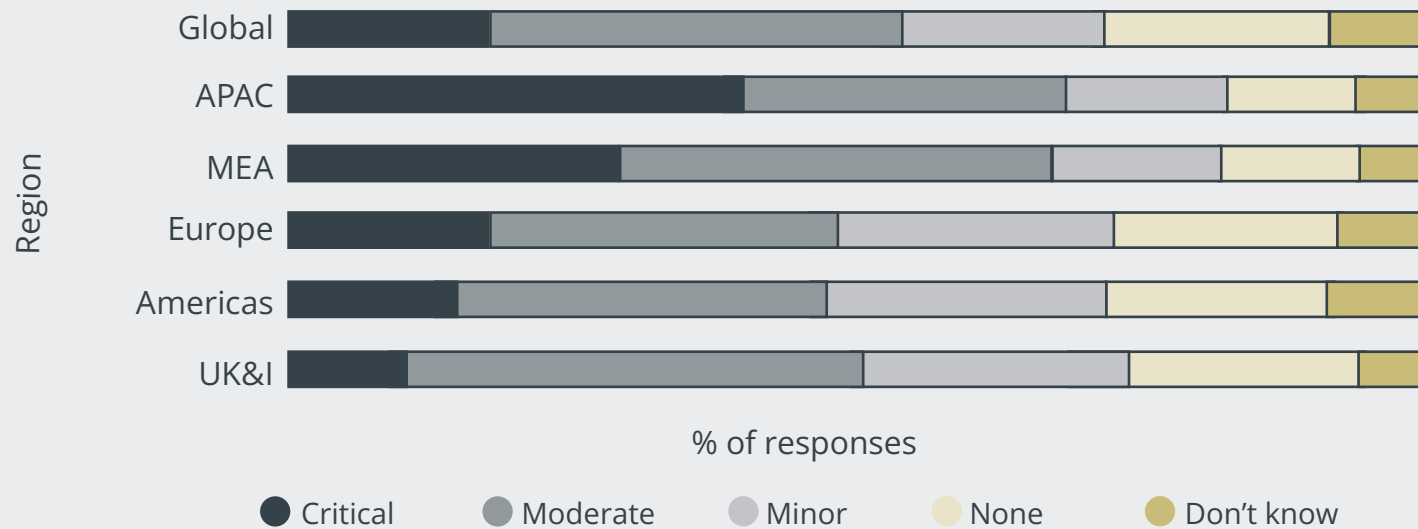


Figure 3: What is the impact of surveying skills shortages on your organisation?

Looking at the data by global region, the proportion of respondents describing the skills shortage as critical was highest in APAC (40%) followed by MEA (29%). For the UK&I, the comparable figure was just 13%, but a further 38% did describe the shortfall as moderate.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, when the results are disaggregated by professional sphere it is the public sector where the highest number believe the shortfall is critical or moderate. Globally, 70% of respondents working for the state (whether centrally or through a related organisation) take this perspective versus only half of those working in private consultancy.

Looking into the reasons, issues around retention and retirement rates appear particularly prevalent. These are questions we will return to later in the report.

Interestingly, the feedback is pretty consistent across organisational size. While 22% of respondents from very large organisations indicated the skills shortage was critical and 42% moderate, the respective figures for small organisations were 20% and 43%.

Finally, looking at the results from an age perspective, the concern around skills was highlighted most notably in the 45–54 age bracket where 25% of respondents considered the issue critical. This likely ties into concerns around shortages of mid-career surveyors, a theme we return to later in the report.



Niall McSweeney
FRICS

Head of Development
Advisory (APAC)
Atlas Group

From skills shortage to workforce transformation



In Australia the skills shortage is a clear and urgent challenge that is reducing productivity and work capacity, increasing costs and constraining innovation while also simultaneously driving better work cultures in construction professions in a bid to attract people from all walks of life.

In fields like quantity surveying, addressing this issue is critically important to permit the maintenance of project continuity, supporting client commitments and strengthening the long-term capability of the construction industry.

These pressures are particularly acute across other key professional pathways as well, including construction project management, building certification and urban and regional planning.

Focus also has to be placed on ensuring that those already in the sector have the technical, commercial, digital and professional skills needed to lift productivity and improve project outcomes as outlined in the [Addressing Skills Shortages in Australia Report](#).

In terms of early-career professionals, it is vitally important that steps are taken to ensure that university graduates are job ready and are specifically trained in quantity surveying and other key professional fields where there are critical skills shortages such as building (control) surveying.

For RICS, this reinforces the importance of attracting new talent, improving awareness of professional careers in construction, pushing for immigration processes to be streamlined and less costly and asking for consideration of whether visa conditions should help encourage applicants to stay with employers who sponsor them for longer, supporting more entry pathways and upskilling experienced practitioners.

Impact

This discussion can appear a little theoretical until it comes to trying to gauge the impact of this shortfall. Over half of respondents said that the biggest impact of surveying skills shortages was on the capacity of organisations to undertake new work (Figure 4). This is very similar to the 57% in 2025. In the UK&I results, this figure jumps to 63%, highlighting the acute nature of the problem.

Almost half of respondents said that skills shortages were limiting the time and resource they have available to train or upskill existing staff – a theme that runs throughout our findings. Here the UK&I response is also particularly strong at 55%.

The ability to innovate ranked relatively highly among respondents from APAC and Europe. Given the focus of policymakers in many parts of the world on trying to lift productivity, not just in the built and natural environments, this is a particularly relevant insight that we will explore later with a view to the adoption of AI technology.

Significantly, the two top responses were also most cited when approached by organisation size. The concerns about the ability to innovate are also reflected fairly consistently irrespective of size.

To reiterate the significance of these findings, feedback is explicitly telling us that skills shortages are limiting the industry's ability to address longstanding challenges around productivity and respond to policymaker's urgent call for the delivery of both more homes and better infrastructure in many parts of the world.

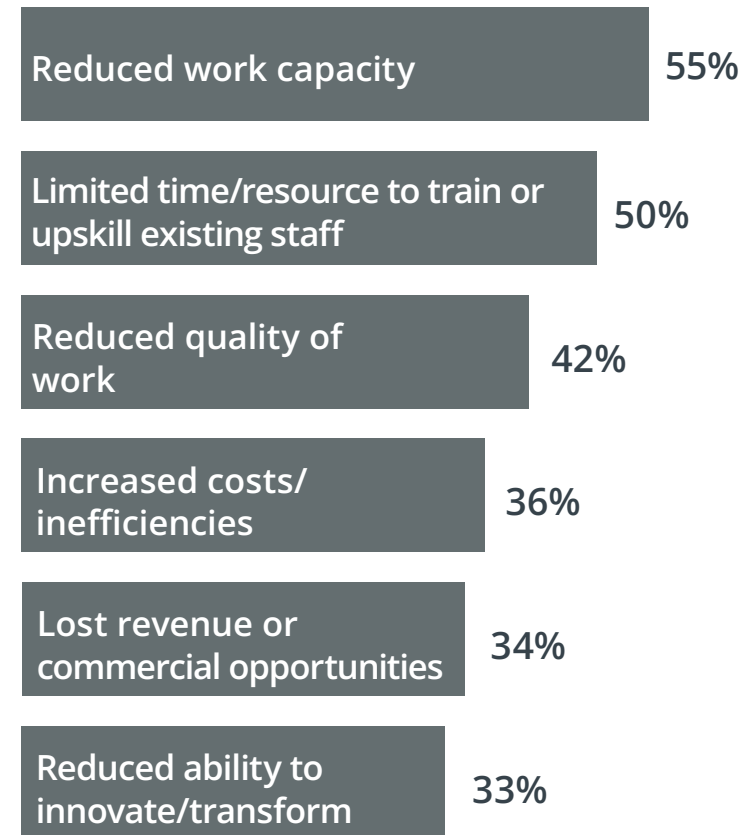


Figure 4: In which of the following ways are skills shortages affecting your work?



Lydia Good

Partner, UK Head of
Talent & Culture,
Knight Frank

The evolving profile of surveying talent



For Knight Frank, the challenge in recruiting high-calibre surveying professionals is increasingly multi-dimensional.

Diversity remains a critical priority, not only improving representation, but ensuring more inclusive pipelines, equitable hiring practices and broader thinking in client solutions.

Alongside this, AI capability is becoming a differentiator. Surveyors are now expected to work with data analytics tools, automation and emerging proptech platforms, requiring a blend of traditional technical expertise with digital fluency and adaptability.

Client-centricity is equally essential. The market demands professionals who can translate technical advice into clear commercial outcomes, build trusted relationships and operate with credibility at senior client level.

Importantly, the sector has been operating in difficult and fluctuating market conditions for a sustained period, requiring resilience, adaptability and forward-looking thinking; these are now core attributes, not differentiators, in the talent we seek.

Finally, risk awareness has heightened in importance across regulation, valuation sensitivity, ESG considerations and reputational exposure. We need individuals who demonstrate sound judgement, strong governance instincts and the ability to balance opportunity with prudence.

Collectively, this means hiring not just for technical competence, but also for broader capability, mindset and long-term potential.

Top reasons for the gap

Last year when we explored the reasons for the skills gap, we were told it was due to an ageing workforce with high retirement rates and a lack of new entrants into the profession. That sentiment was expressed particularly strongly in the UK&I.

For this year, we wanted to delve a little deeper and found some interesting results. As Figure 5 makes clear, there appears to be a particular problem regarding a shortage of mid-career and experienced professionals (this was not a category offered in 2025).

Sixty percent of contributors drew attention to this challenge at a global level and, notably, this was the most cited response in every region, scoring particularly highly in MEA (68%) followed by the UK&I (62%). This picture is also visible across organisations of all sizes, rather than something specific to larger or smaller businesses/institutions.

Alongside this, just over 40% of respondents drew attention to issues around retention, which aligns with the reported shortage of surveyors who have some level of experience.

Significantly, this was referenced more frequently by women (47%) than men (39%), a subject we return to when looking at barriers to progression. From a regional perspective, in the UK&I retention was seen as the bigger issue (43%).

The feedback this year continues to highlight the challenges of a shortage of new entrants (42%) and high retirement rates (20%). A lack of new entrants is viewed as particularly acute in the Americas (48%) followed by the UK&I (46%), though less so in MEA (27%).

Finally, around 25% of respondents indicate that technological change outpacing training is contributing to the skills shortage. In last year's survey, two in five respondents acknowledged some level of concern regarding how rapidly technology is changing the surveying profession.

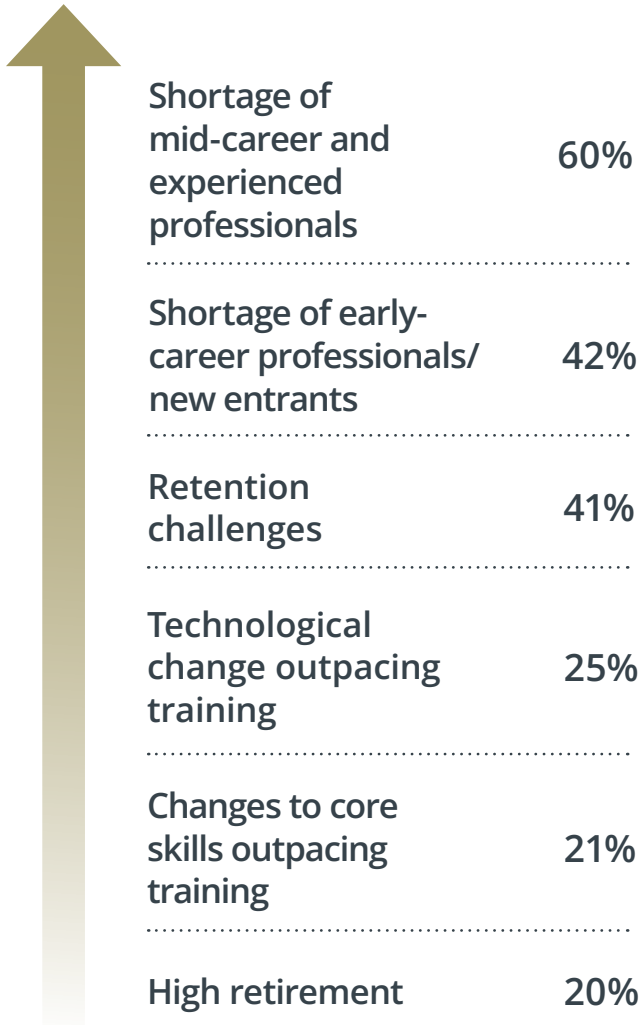


Figure 5: In your experience, which of the following have been the main drivers of skills shortages in your part of the surveying sector?



Tim Shelton FRICS

RICS UAE Advisory
Board Member
Operations Director –
Technology & Advisory,
Omnium International
Ltd

Closing the skills gaps between traditional training and future value



From my perspective as an RICS UAE Advisory Board Member, the skills gap in construction is no longer just a shortage of quantity surveyors, project managers, valuers, or cost consultants. It is a gap between the way our professions were trained and the way value is now being created.

Many of the tasks traditionally given to graduates, i.e. measurement, document review, reporting, data processing, benchmarking and first-pass analysis, are increasingly being automated. That creates a real challenge: how do we develop future professionals when the traditional training ground is disappearing?

The answer is not to reduce graduate intake, but to redesign it. Graduates need earlier exposure to using judgement, client conversations, data interpretation, risk, sustainability, procurement strategy and technology-enabled decision-making.

At the same time, the industry must bring in skills from outside its traditional boundaries: data analysts, product owners, AI specialists, systems thinkers and people who understand platform business models.

For the quantity surveying profession specifically, the future will require more than commercial control. It will require professionals who can connect cost with programme, carbon, procurement, operational performance and asset value.

The next generation of RICS professionals must be technically credible, digitally fluent, commercially aware and entrepreneurial enough to spot new forms of value before clients have fully defined them.

Changing skills requirements

One of the aims of the skills survey is to better understand the current extent and impact of shortages and how the industry is responding. A second area of focus is the skills that professionals think would most support them in their work and careers over the coming years.

Emerging skills for the next 3–5 years

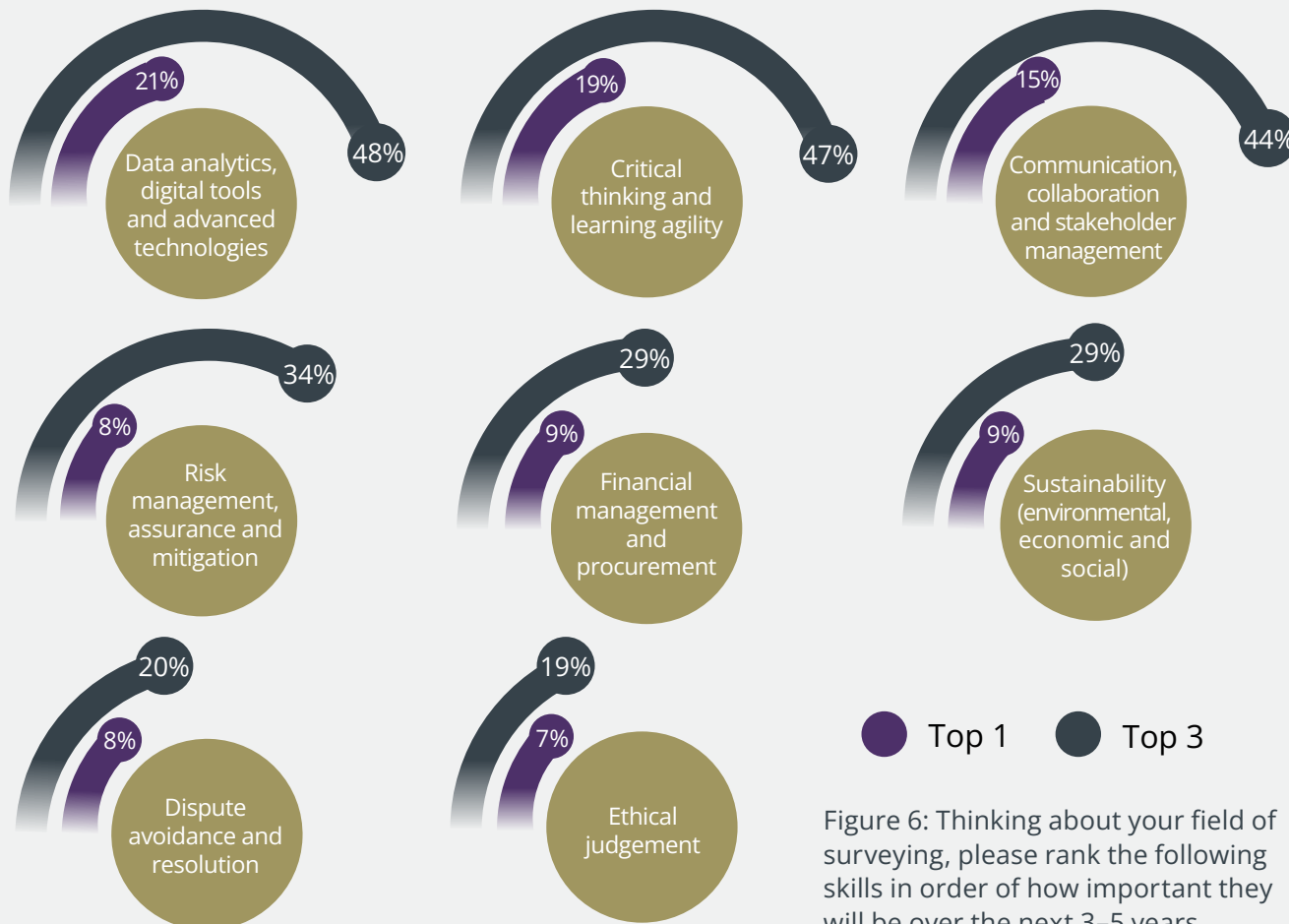


Figure 6: Thinking about your field of surveying, please rank the following skills in order of how important they will be over the next 3–5 years



Generali Real Estate's learning priorities are evolving in two main directions.

The first is digital transformation. A comprehensive AI literacy and transformation journey is being developed to build a shared understanding of AI, promote the responsible and effective use of digital tools and help business areas identify, test and scale AI applications in real operational workflows.

The second is a stronger client and investor orientation. Professionals need to go beyond technical excellence and develop a deeper understanding of investor objectives, allocation criteria and expectations. They must also strengthen their ability to anticipate client needs, communicate investment strategies and build long-term trust-based relationships.

Generali Real Estate does not view the skills challenge simply as a shortage of technical professionals. The critical issue is the accelerated transformation of the skills mix required across the real estate industry; technical expertise must increasingly be combined with digital literacy, business acumen, investor orientation, communication capabilities and the agility to continuously learn and adapt.

Alex Eugenio Sala
Head of HR & Organization, Generali Real Estate

Last year's survey placed advanced digital tools as the most important emerging skill and highlighted widespread agreement with the statement 'AI will help surveyors deliver greater value in the future'. What is new this year is the almost equal priority placed on critical thinking and human-focused skills.

This reflects two things.

- 1 Data and technology skills are core capabilities recognised as essential to surveying by professionals across the board, in a similar way to core technical skills and capabilities.
- 2 Technical expertise is not sufficient on its own – professional judgement and interpersonal skills remain vital and have increasing significance in a world where data, tech and AI are being adopted in the mainstream.

As the financial, risk and other operational barriers to technology adoption fall, more companies and services providers can integrate AI and other digital tools into their everyday operations.

Discussions held during RICS' Shaping the Future roadshow highlighted how client expectations are changing as AI and new technologies become more widespread, and more routine tasks become automated.

Surveying professionals will be increasingly expected to spend more time delivering value to clients at the strategic advisory level: critically evaluating the outputs from data and technology, interpreting risks and effectively communicating this insight to clients and stakeholders.

Interestingly, when looking across responses from different global regions, Europe (62%), MEA (57%) and APAC (55%) place the greatest emphasis on data, digital tools and technology skills (66%), whereas the UK&I placed greater importance on critical thinking (47%) and communication (47%) than data analytics, etc. (44%).

According to RICS' [AI in commercial property and construction report 2026](#), commercial property has seen more adoption of AI than construction. This could explain the differing emphasis, as a higher proportion of chartered surveyors work in commercial real estate and valuation in Europe than the UK&I.

Combined with the staged implementation of the EU's AI Act, it is perhaps unsurprising to see related skills coming top among respondents from the European region.

Data from [past RICS research](#) highlights the leading role states and projects based in the Middle East have taken on digital adoption, where it is viewed as an important mechanism in establishing the digital economy and accelerating the Saudi Vision 2030 and Dubai 2040 Urban Master Plan. Digital adoption, particularly in the construction sector, is also [accelerating across countries in APAC](#).

The drive to develop a workforce capable of translating this digital adoption into stronger performance is evident.

Interestingly, comparing responses across organisation size reveals fairly unanimous agreement on priority skills, save sole traders for whom the pressures associated with running a business alongside being a practicing professional are evident. For this group, critical thinking and learning agility (47%) was selected more than either data analytics and digital tools (40%) or human-centred skills (39%), and for whom dispute resolution (26%) ranked more highly than sustainability, financial management or ethical judgement.



Sr Natalie Yong
MRICS

Managing Director, LCH
Quantity Surveyors PTE
Ltd

Innovation and capability building can strengthen the talent pipeline



Singapore continues to face a severe shortage of quantity surveyors, making it increasingly necessary to attract talent from neighbouring countries.

However, this remains challenging due to manpower regulations and the limited pool of experienced quantity surveying professionals available across the region. Addressing the shortage therefore requires not only attracting overseas talent, but also strengthening the local pipeline and improving productivity.

One of the greatest opportunities lies in AI. Among the built environment professions, quantity surveyors are particularly well positioned to adopt AI to automate repetitive tasks, improve cost analysis and optimise workflows.

By leveraging AI effectively, quantity surveying professionals can spend less time on manual processes and more time providing strategic commercial advice and managing project risks.

Looking ahead, technical competence alone will not be enough. The future quantity surveyor must combine strong professional fundamentals with excellent soft skills. The ability to manage objections, present ideas convincingly, read the room, negotiate and tell a compelling story will become increasingly valuable.

These skills, however, can only be built upon a solid foundation of quantity surveying knowledge and practical, on-the-ground experience – the invaluable ‘baptism of fire’ that transforms theory into sound professional judgement.

Sustainability-related skills are being embedded

A comparison of the top emerging skills for the next 3–5 years (Figure 6) to a similar question asked in 2025 points to a fall in the perceived priority given to sustainability skills. While 40% chose ‘Sustainability/decarbonisation expertise’ in 2025, ‘Sustainability (environmental, economic, social)’ was selected by 29% of respondents this year.

While the emphasis in last year’s question on decarbonisation may have influenced the greater importance given in responses, it could also reflect sustainability becoming more of a core competence for the profession.

Looking across age groups, younger respondents and those in earlier career stages placed a higher priority on sustainability than their more senior counterparts; 41% of trainee/apprentices (36% of 18–34) ranked sustainability in their top 3 skills, compared with 26% of senior professionals (and 25% of those aged 55+).

Despite this decline over the short term, 78% of professionals selected one or more areas of sustainability where they felt upskilling would positively impact their professional practice, reflecting the ongoing importance of sustainability skills to surveying practice.

Figure 7 highlights that professional skills relating to sustainability are becoming embedded, as only a minority of respondents chose sustainability basic/fundamentals.

The most popular areas for sustainability upskilling reflect our findings on the need to better harness digital tools and technology, in this instance for sustainability, and the need to keep ahead of changing sustainability policy and regulation, particularly with regard to carbon management and reporting.

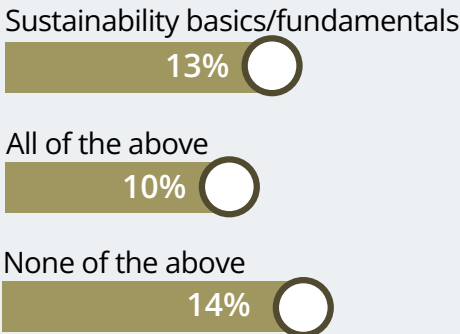
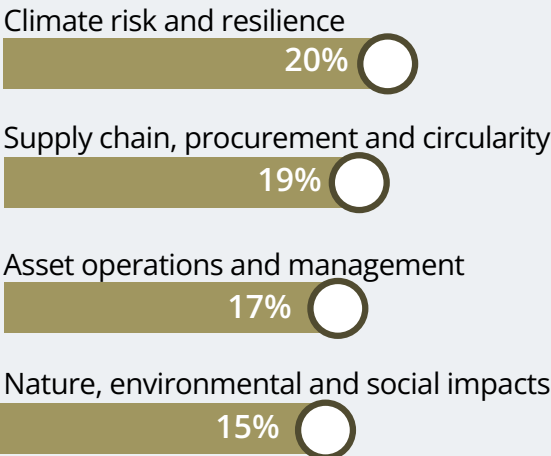
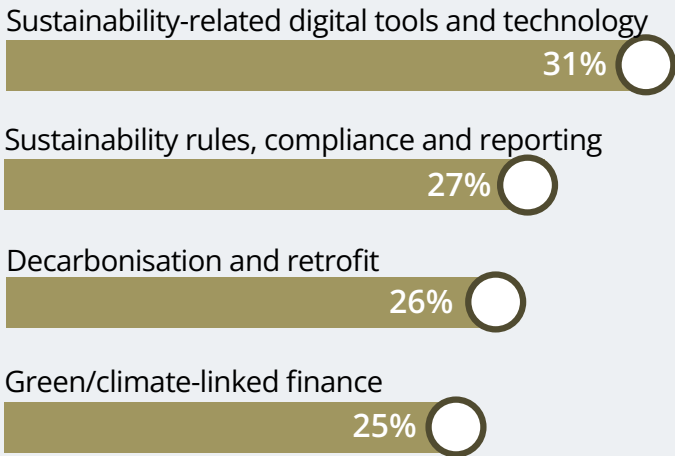


Figure 7: Which of the following areas of sustainability, if any, do you feel you personally have a skills gap in that impacts your professional practice?



Stefan De Goeij MRICS

RICS European World
Regional Board Chair
Head of Sustainability
& ESG, Central and East
Europe and the Nordics,
Cushman & Wakefield

Surveying skills report

Sustainability has become a core competence for the profession

“

In the 2025 report it was made clear that among the highest rankings for future skills for surveyors, sustainability and decarbonisation in building surveying and commercial real estate top the charts.

We have seen in the past 12 months throughout Europe that sustainability is now an integral part of the real estate business, no longer a theme to discuss, but deeply embedded in the processes. Life cycle analysis and whole life carbon trajectories are connected to new developments and refurbishments, sustainability red flag reports drive 'stay versus go' scenarios and lead to clear agreements in real estate transactions, and energy efficiency is certainly driving real estate operations.

We have also seen that capex for improving energy efficiency and physical climate risks are on the brink of affecting property values. There is still a lack of clarity as to what extent these risks are being recognised in property markets, but it seems to be a matter of time before they are fully reflected in valuations and financial decision-making in property markets.

To build a sustainable foundation of skilled surveyors, RICS recognised the importance of sustainability by making this a mandatory competence across the APC pathways and running a pilot pathway on Sustainability Advisory.

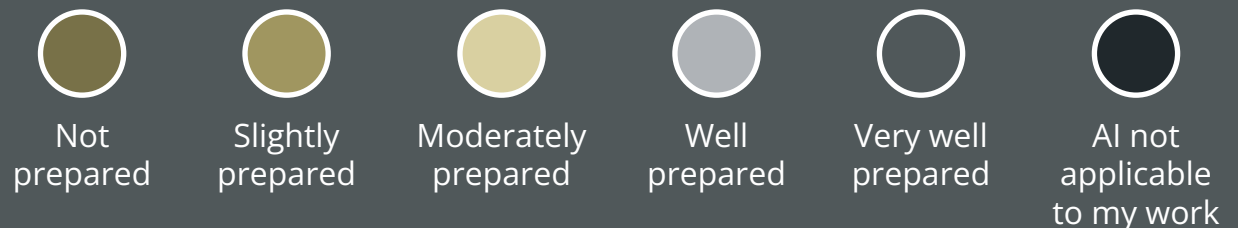
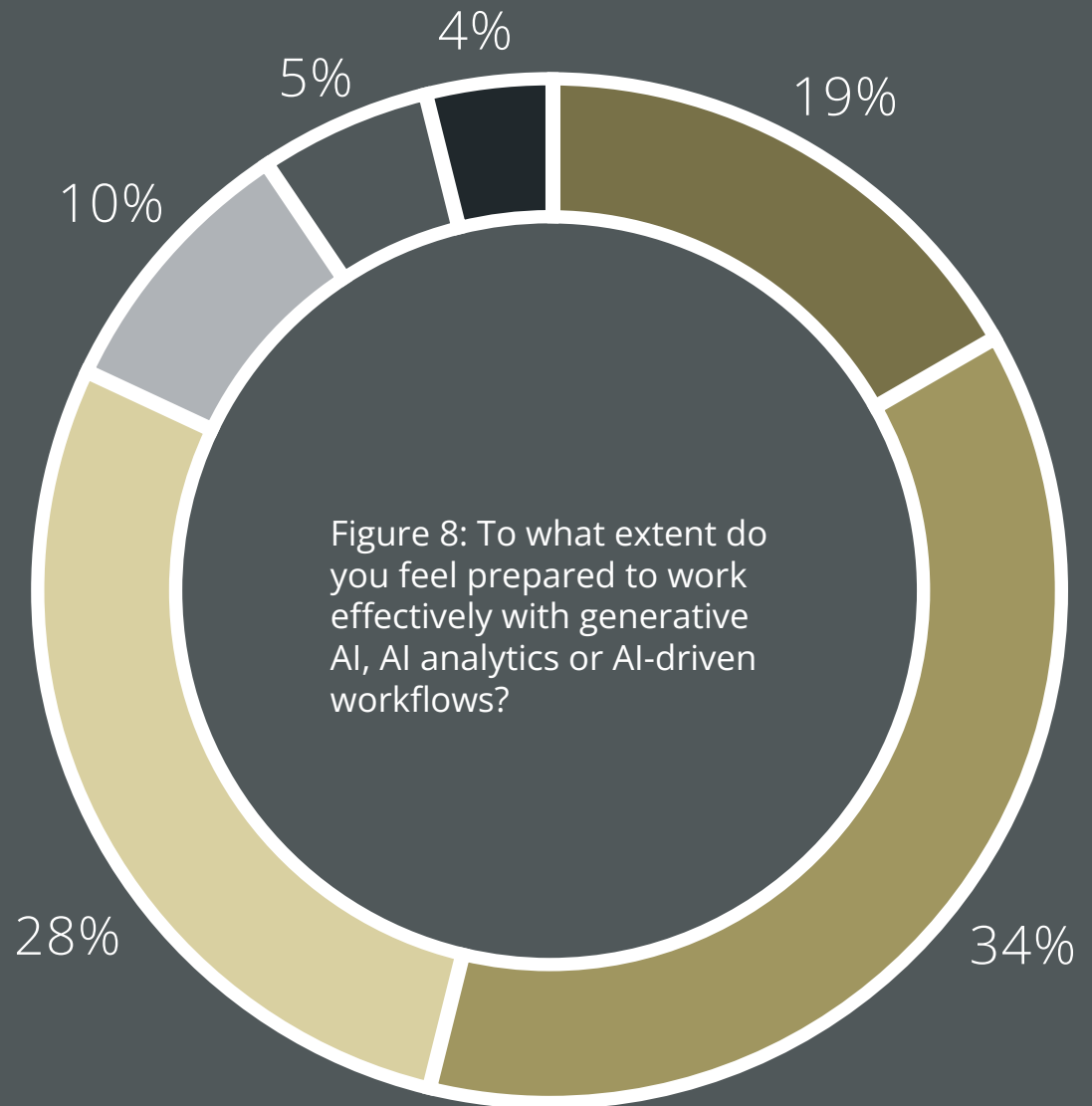
Surveying in the digital age

Given the prominence of data, digital tools and technology as the most important emerging skill, we also asked respondents how prepared they felt to work effectively with this rapidly evolving technology.

Figure 8 broadly reflects the findings of the recent [AI in commercial property and construction report](#), which demonstrates that the surveying profession, like most others, is starting a journey both in terms of beginning to apply the new technologies and considering how best to invest in this area over the coming years.

Slightly more respondents said they were not prepared to work with AI than said they were well or very well prepared.

Significantly, the largest share of respondents in all regions indicated that they were either slightly or moderately prepared to work effectively with AI. The highest proportion suggesting that they were well or very well prepared was in Europe (25%) followed by MEA (23%).



Preparing for the next wave of AI

“

Attention is already turning to the next wave of AI adoption: AI agents. Right now, these

AI systems mostly do simple tasks on your behalf, such as ‘prioritise my unread emails’. But they will increasingly be able to handle more complex tasks, with more autonomy, e.g. ‘arrange my hotel and flights for the upcoming trip, including airport transfers’.

Translated into the surveying world, ‘agentic AI’ presents a huge opportunity. Repetitive, manual tasks can be delegated to AI agents, operating under the supervision of experienced surveyors trained in ‘responsible AI’. This would give those professionals more time to focus on activities that deliver the greatest value to clients, and to develop the knowledge and professional judgement of more junior colleagues.

Some worry about AI diminishing the roles of surveyors, or undermining the technical expertise held by the most experienced practitioners. On the contrary, agentic AI can help address productivity issues in the sector and attract younger generations into the profession.

Organisations that embrace agentic AI will thrive by using their experts’ knowledge and skills to train and oversee this next generation of surveyors and their agent colleagues.



Tom Heath

Chief Data and AI
Officer, Ward Williams

Analysing the results by age classification shows a predictable pattern (Figure 9), that the readiness to work with AI falls with age.

The gap is wide: the youngest are nearly three times as likely as the oldest to say they are well or very prepared. However, low confidence is not limited to older respondents. Most people across all age groups do not feel well prepared, with that shortfall growing larger with each older age band.

Finally, considering preparedness by professional discipline it is valuation/ investment advisory that has the strongest reading for members suggesting they are well equipped (21%).

However, this is still a minority and close to half of respondents still indicate they are not or only slightly prepared.

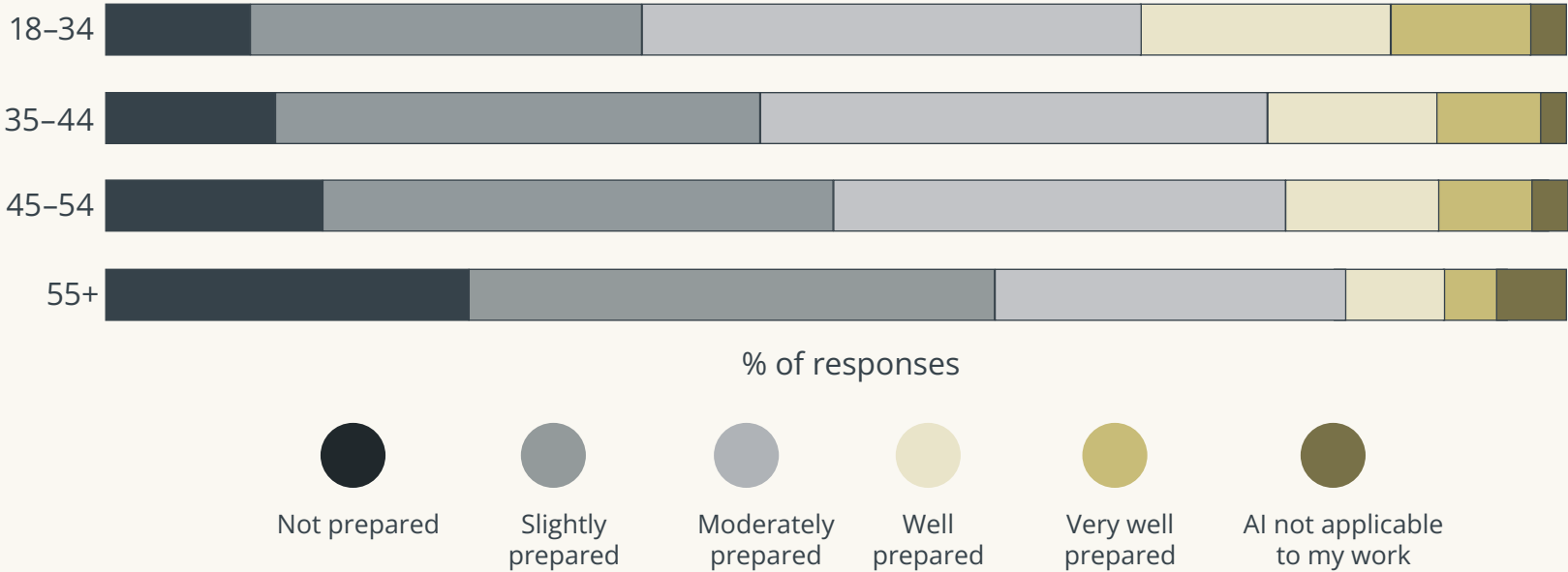


Figure 9: To what extent do you feel prepared to work effectively with generative AI, AI analytics or AI-driven workflows?

AI literacy: the profession's next essential skill

“

Around one-fifth of surveyors feel wholly unprepared for AI, and at a recent global conference more than half of those polled had no idea where to start.

Into that vacuum has ridden something of a Wild West: vendors selling three-to-five-year commitments to tools that are often little more than a thin layer over the general-purpose AI models organisations already pay for.

My advice is simple. Ask what a tool genuinely adds to what you already have, and be wary of long lock-ins in a market moving this fast; for a small practice, one poor procurement decision can be existential.

This is why the defining future skill is genuine AI literacy, and it is far broader than learning to prompt.

It is the judgement to distinguish the useful from the merely well marketed, to govern the risks, and to understand regulation such as the EU AI Act and RICS' [Responsible use of artificial intelligence in surveying practice](#) standard. The stakes are rising, because clients will not pay indefinitely for hours of work that a machine can complete in minutes.

However, practitioners cannot build these skills alone. Too many universities still tell students to avoid AI rather than teaching them to use it responsibly; we tried the same with computers in the 1980s, and it did not age well. AI must become a core, formally assessed part of surveying education. The profession's future depends on it.



James Garner
FRICS

Head of AI and Data,
Gleeds

AI-related training needs

The priority given to AI basics in Figure 10 reflects that professionals feel their greatest training needs are practical: concerning automation skills and workflow improvement.

However, the priority given to AI basics also reflects the limited experience many have with harnessing this emerging technology in their professional work.

Looking at the results by age and career stage, data for the younger cohort suggests a slightly higher level of confidence than their more senior or older counterparts.

Just over a third (37%) of trainee/ apprentices and 39% aged 18–34 put AI basics in their top three training needs, compared with 51% of those in mid-career (the highest proportion among all career stages) or aged 35–44 (52%) and senior professionals (48%).

Workflow improvement is the second-highest priority for those working at mid-career level (51%, after practical tools and automation skills; 55%). For those overseeing complex multi-team workflows, the offer of a more streamlined, efficient process, supported by AI agents, is understandable when viewed through the lens of time pressures being among the biggest impacts of the skills gap.



Figure 10: Rank the following areas of training or upskilling in order of how useful they would be in helping you work more confidently with AI, digital technologies or automated systems



Faith Locken
MRICS

CEO, We Rise In

Thinking beyond recruitment: retention, progression and leadership development

“

Through our work at We Rise In, we see talented mid-to-senior professionals who have the technical capability and experience to progress, but are not always receiving the investment, leadership development or opportunities they need to take that next step. Too often, organisations respond to skills shortages by trying to recruit rather than developing the people already in their business. Yet if the organisational culture does not support progression, those people will eventually leave too.

There is also an opportunity to broaden who we consider ‘talent’. We need to get better at recognising transferable human skills, such as communication, relationship-building and stakeholder management, and then investing in the technical development needed to progress.

Closing the skills gap therefore requires organisations to think beyond recruitment. We need to create workplaces where talented professionals can see a future for themselves, with meaningful investment in leadership development, clear pathways for progression and inclusive cultures that enable people to thrive at every stage of their career. Closing the skills gap isn’t just about attracting more people. It’s about creating organisations where talented people can see a future for themselves.

Closing the skills gap

Providing time/access and covering cost

As Figure 11 makes clear, time and cost stand out as the two most prominent barriers to developing new skills. High costs being the most significant barrier is fairly consistent when looking across global regions, with the exception of Europe, where 35% of professionals selected a lack of time over costs (30%).

The picture is also fairly consistent when looking at organisation size, with the exception of sole traders (44%) or very small organisations (47%), where high costs was a more acutely felt barrier than a lack of time (28% and 36% respectively).

In an environment where having the available time and funds to upskill are key barriers, being able to access the right kind of mentorship, support and opportunities to develop and learn becomes even more important.

The data shows that access to mentorship is important to respondents in most career stages and age cohorts.

Alongside trainee/apprentices, this was ranked the third most important barrier to upskilling by those in early and mid-career, and only becoming a lower priority as professionals reach senior levels of experience, or those in the 55+ age group.

The response from trainee/apprentices is understandable given the dependence of this cohort on mentors and councillors when passing their training or apprenticeships.

For more established professionals (those in mid-career), access to support from more experienced colleagues is also important to help develop the skills and confidence required to navigate greater responsibility, lead larger teams and manage risks on more complex projects.

Where more experienced professionals say they have limited capacity to support more junior colleagues, skills shortages become self-perpetuating. To ensure the pipeline of talent continues through and mid- and senior-career level shortages are addressed, breaking this self-reinforcing cycle stands as a key priority.

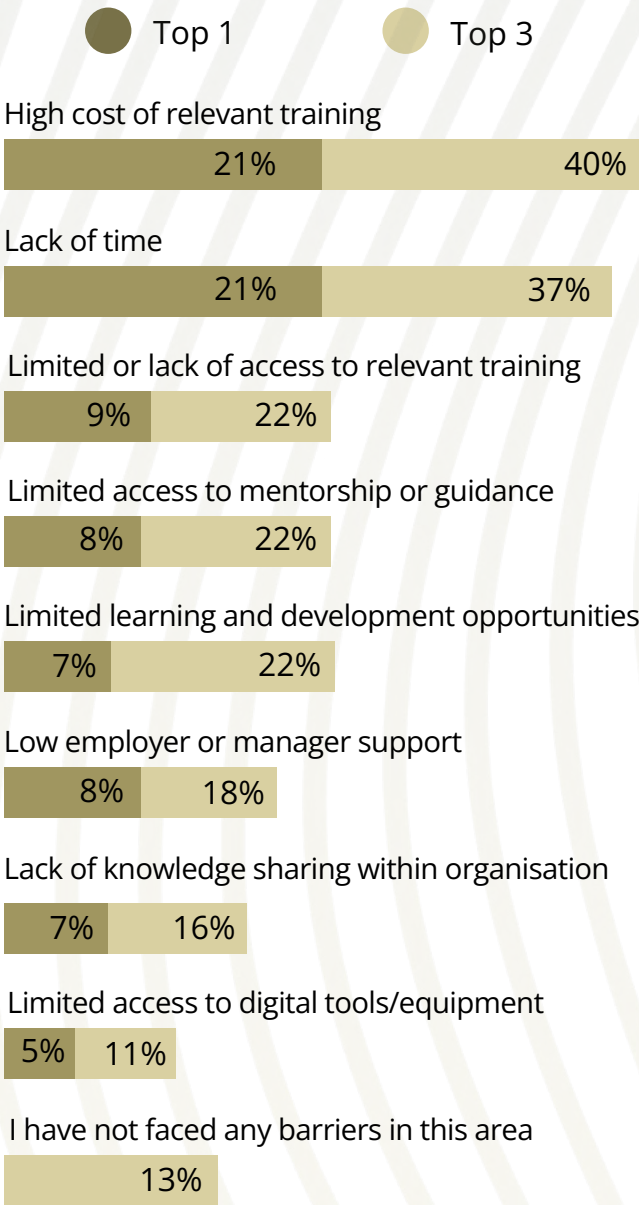


Figure 11: What are the biggest barriers you face when developing new skills in surveying? (Rank 1-3)

Focusing on progression

Figure 12 highlights how the sector can simplify progression and remove barriers to career advancement through greater transparency and clearer frameworks for career pathways, succession plans and skills progression requirements.

Responses show that access to mentorship is as important to progression as it is to upskilling.

Respondents in more junior or trainee roles selected cross-disciplinary skills and training as barriers more than their senior colleagues, while for respondents in APAC and Europe, this was a higher priority barrier than unclear progression requirements (second most important after lack of transparency).

An important piece of feedback for the industry is that 36% of women selected bias or inequality as a barrier to progression, compared with 16% of men.

This was the most selected barrier among women, compared to fifth for men. While the industry has been working to address gender-based bias and inequality, the results indicate that more can be done in this area. Considering this feedback in light of a shortage of mid-career and experienced professionals highlights the importance of inclusive and equitable retention strategies.

Lack of transparency in career pathways or succession plans



Unclear or hard-to-navigate skills progression requirements



Lack of cross-disciplinary skills or training



Bias or inequality in progression or selection processes



Limited access to mentorship or guidance



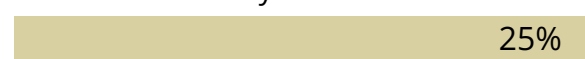
Low employer or manager support



Few early-career opportunities



I have not faced any barriers



● Top 1 ● Top 3

Figure 12: Which of the following are the biggest barriers you face when progressing in the surveying profession?



The sector's skills gap is not a recruitment problem. It is a retention problem wearing a recruitment disguise.

Attraction without retention is an expensive revolving door, and it explains why the mid and senior pipeline runs dry. That is an unmanaged organisational risk, and inclusive culture and behaviours is the proven mitigation.

Very disappointingly, the sector still does not invest in this vital area of organisational infrastructure. When people can see how progression decisions are made, what good looks like at the next level, and who is accountable for their development, they stay and grow.

Transparent pathways mean published criteria, consistent sponsorship and managers working in culturally intelligent organisations with diverse teams. Filling the pipeline matters. Stopping the leaks matters more.

Marsha Ramroop
Founder and Director, Unheard Voice Consultancy Ltd



Grace Conisbee MRICS

Managing Director,
Melrose Property
Consultants Ltd

Supporting talent at every career stage



As a profession, we cannot address the skills challenge by focusing solely on recruitment.

The real opportunity lies in creating sustainable career pathways that attract, develop and retain talent throughout the profession.

This is particularly important for SMEs, which make up a significant proportion of surveying practices and provide many of the opportunities available to early-career professionals. SMEs often offer broad exposure to clients, disciplines and real-world challenges, helping surveyors develop both technical competence and commercial awareness.

However, they can face greater pressures when competing for talent, investing in training and releasing staff for professional development.

At the same time, the profession is changing rapidly. Surveyors are increasingly expected to combine technical knowledge with data literacy, digital capability, sustainability expertise and strong interpersonal skills. While technologies such as AI will reshape aspects of the profession, they will not replace the need for professional judgement, trusted advice and relationship management.

To build a resilient future workforce, the industry must work collaboratively to improve awareness of surveying careers, support diverse entry routes and ensure that professionals at all stages of their careers have access to meaningful development opportunities, as well as meaningful support during every lift stage.

Addressing the skills gap

When asked which strategies organisations are utilising to address future skills shortages, Figure 13 reflects a focus on developing the existing workforce through training, productivity improvement and retention. This shows that organisations are prioritising strategies designed to address the key dynamics of the skills gaps highlighted in previous sections of this report.

Just over a third (35%) of respondents said their organisation is adopting AI, automation and digital tools to increase productivity. Addressing a shortage of people at the right level through technology deployment that enables experienced professionals to oversee a greater amount of work may be more achievable in the short term. At the same time, it's clear that organisations do not perceive technology to be a substitute for investment in upskilling, which respondents selected as the number one answer to closing skills gaps (42%).

Following the strategies targeting workforce development and retention (either by rewards and progression (31%) or through flexible work and culture (29%) come efforts to expand the workforce, primarily through early career recruitment (19%), targeting

career switchers and specialist talent (both selected by 16%). Outsourcing/offshoring tasks (10%) and recruiting internationally (7%) were given the lowest priority among respondents at global level.

Looking across global regions shows that, for organisations in the Americas, recruiting internationally is as important as early-career recruitment (22%). Discussion with professionals in these regions supported these findings. Where few or no university courses are available to support the talent pipeline into surveying specialisms, organisations operating in these regions are seeking talent from other countries.

Discussions with regional leaders highlight similar patterns in Singapore, where there is a shortage of graduates with the right skills for quantity surveying, and Malaysia, where relevant university courses are popular.

For Europe, MEA and APAC, the responses show specialist talent recruitment (22%, 22% and 20% respectively) is slightly more important than early-career recruitment (17%, 21% and 12%). In Europe, the data chimes with the primacy also given to adopting AI (46%) over upskilling current staff (32%) by respondents in this region.



Figure 13: How is your organisation preparing for future skills shortages or gaps? (Top 3)



Prof. Dr Alfonso
Valero MRICS

Regional Operations
Lead, Occupancy
Planning &
Management, JLL

Solving skills shortages through internal capability building

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Spain's real estate and surveying organisations face a critical skills shortage, but not quite the one everyone assumes.

Quality is slipping and hiring costs are rising. Corporate real estate teams can't keep pace with demand or innovation.

On the surface, it's the usual story: retirements are accelerating, talent is drifting away and technology moves faster than training keeps up. But here's the opportunity: the profession still attracts ambitious people and RICS professionals. Meaningful projects, emerging technology and international scope draw smart professionals in. When it comes to HR development, training is expensive and hard to access.

So, knowledge stays siloed. Career paths are opaque, shadowed by perceived bias and fragmented specialisations. This means talented people arrive motivated, then stall.

The counterweight: organisations increasingly see the answer clearly – AI and automation, yes, but also flexible work, structured knowledge sharing and transparent progression.

Data analytics, dispute resolution and risk management are key capabilities everyone's chasing. Spanish professionals report readiness for AI adoption, though workflow training and governance remain gaps.

Sustainability adds another layer; decarbonisation, climate resilience and green finance top their agenda.

The real question isn't whether Spain's real estate sector can fix this. It's whether organisations will invest in building capability from within or treat it as a recruiting problem.

Attracting future talent

When considering what might encourage more people to think about a career in surveying it can be helpful to consider what attracted professionals into the sector. Figure 14 shows that having a direct impact on the world we live in, the job stability and good career prospects offered by the profession are highly valued, indeed a little more so than simply salary and earnings potential.

Delving down a little more deeply into this question around motivations reveals some interesting differences among regions and ages.

For example, in the MEA the opportunity to work on interesting and impactful projects scores particularly highly (60%), which (given the nature of the big developments in countries such as KSA and UAE) is unsurprising.

Alongside this, the scope to work internationally is also a particular attraction for this region (53%) and the Americas (43%). This likely reflects that in both regions, there are specific countries that are open to encouraging skilled professionals from other parts of the world to help shortages.

It also highlights that for many members working outside the UK, RICS is a globally-recognised qualification effectively providing a passport to work.

Unsurprisingly, the appeal of the surveying profession does differ by age cohort. The 18–34 category scores relatively highly on good career prospects, attractive salaries and earnings potential, and international work opportunities. Comparatively, although the scope to work on impactful projects also ranked highly for this group, it is actually the top motivator for both 35–44 and 45–54 age groups.





Tilottama Dhar

MRICS

Head – Operations,
Industry Advisory
Services, CBRE South
Asia

The case for cross-disciplinary expertise

“

There is real privilege in what we do as chartered surveyors – helping governments and clients across Vietnam, Indonesia, the Philippines, Malaysia, Thailand and Cambodia plan the infrastructure on which economies are built, work few professions can rival. Yet each hiring round leaves me uneasy.

The shortage is not one of numbers but of judgement, and it runs across every layer, from new entrants to the scarce mid-career professional. Those who can marry economics – trade flows, demographics, growth trajectories – with real estate and capital markets are vanishingly rare. Too few arrive able to structure innovative financial instruments, or to draw on the landmark cases that define genuine economic and spatial transformation.

The roots are structural and cultural. Regional education silos economics, engineering and valuation, so the profession still treats cross-disciplinary fluency as optional rather than essential. Status flows to medicine, engineering and banking, while surveying is obscured by a ‘sales’ perception that deters our brightest. In India it remains an afterthought.

But I am optimistic. The Philippines, now offering surveying degrees and licensing the profession, shows what deliberate professionalisation achieves. RICS is superbly placed to lead – defining an integrated competency that bridges finance, economics and the built environment, and reclaiming our field as what it truly is: the architecture of national growth.

Conclusions and next steps

The findings of this year's skills survey present a clear and compelling message: the profession is facing a skills challenge that extends far beyond the recruitment of graduates and early-career professionals.

Shortages are being felt throughout the talent pipeline, with many organisations reporting significant gaps at mid-career, experienced practitioner and leadership levels. These shortages are now impacting productivity, restricting organisations' ability to take on new work and limiting the profession's capacity to respond to some of society's most pressing needs, including housing delivery, infrastructure development and the transition to a more sustainable built environment.

The profession is also operating in a period of unprecedented change. Advances in AI, data, digital technologies and automation are transforming how surveying services are delivered; they are also reshaping the skills required to succeed at all stages of a practitioner's career. Respondents view AI, data and technology skills as core emerging capabilities that should sit alongside traditional technical competences.

The importance of professional skills

Yet the results also reinforce that technical knowledge alone is no longer sufficient to thrive as an informed practitioner in contemporary environments. Professional judgement, client care, ethical decision-making, communication, collaboration and leadership skills are becoming increasingly important in a world where technology is augmenting, rather than replacing, professional expertise.

For RICS, these findings underline the need for a transformative response; incremental change will not be sufficient.

The profession requires a comprehensive overhaul of how knowledge, skills and professional competence are assessed for candidates looking to achieve Associate or Chartered status. This begins with modernising the curriculum that underpins our qualification pathways and lifelong learning frameworks. Importantly, the new curriculum has been co-created with members, to ensure it's both comprehensive and representative.



The challenge for the profession is twofold. First, we must address

immediate skills shortages by modernising how we attract talent. Second, we must fundamentally rethink how professional competence is developed and showcased throughout an individual's entire career.

Dr Chris Walsh
Director of Education and Skills,
RICS

Making chartered surveying more accessible

Our qualifications and professional development programme will modernise routes to membership by introducing a modular approach to learning and contemporary assessment methodologies. The new routes will also be mapped to a recognised qualification framework to underpin the credibility and international portability of RICS membership. This modular approach to qualification will also open new opportunities for individuals with diverse educational or workplace-based learning experiences to obtain membership status, which is vitally important given the increasingly fluid nature of career paths.

Introducing modular learning as a key component of the qualification and lifelong process also aligns with how ongoing professional development is approached by bodies such as [Skills England](#).

The survey highlights that time, cost and access to training remain the most significant barriers to upskilling. It also reveals that mentorship, guidance and clear career development pathways are particularly important for both early and mid-career professionals.

Without intervention, these barriers risk creating a cycle where skills shortages reduce the capacity to train and develop people, which in turn exacerbates future shortages.

Surveying skills report

Professional development is a lifelong journey

Equally important is ensuring these capabilities are developed progressively throughout a professional's career rather than concentrated solely at the point of entry into the profession.

Survey findings confirm that some of the most significant capability gaps emerge years after qualification, when professionals move into management positions, take responsibility for larger and more complex projects or lead multidisciplinary teams.

Addressing these gaps requires a shift from viewing qualification as an endpoint to recognising professional development as a continuous journey. Our new approach to lifelong learning, including new digital capabilities and ongoing credentialing, will enable members to take control of their development and self-select competences that will move them forward in their careers.

Developing these broader capabilities is critical to creating future leaders for the profession. This constellation of existing and emerging competences will be encoded in our new curriculum.

Initiatives such as the EU's [Union of Skills](#), which aims to tackle skills shortages, boost competitiveness and support lifelong learning across the EU, reflects how important these wider strategies are across the globe.

Viewed collectively, these findings present both a warning and an opportunity. The warning is that skills shortages, if left unaddressed, risk constraining growth, innovation and the profession's ability to deliver positive societal outcomes.

The opportunity for RICS is that, through a bold redesign of qualifications, curriculum and lifelong learning, we can help create a stronger, more resilient and future-ready profession. By supporting professionals from entry through to senior leadership, and developing the holistic capabilities demanded by a rapidly changing world, RICS can play a pivotal role in closing today's skills gaps while building the workforce that the profession needs for decades to come.

A shared responsibility

The scale of change required cannot be achieved by any single organisation acting alone. Success will depend on strong partnerships across the built and natural environments sector, bringing together professional and regulatory bodies, employers, education providers and practitioners to collectively shape a more responsive, inclusive and future-ready skills system.

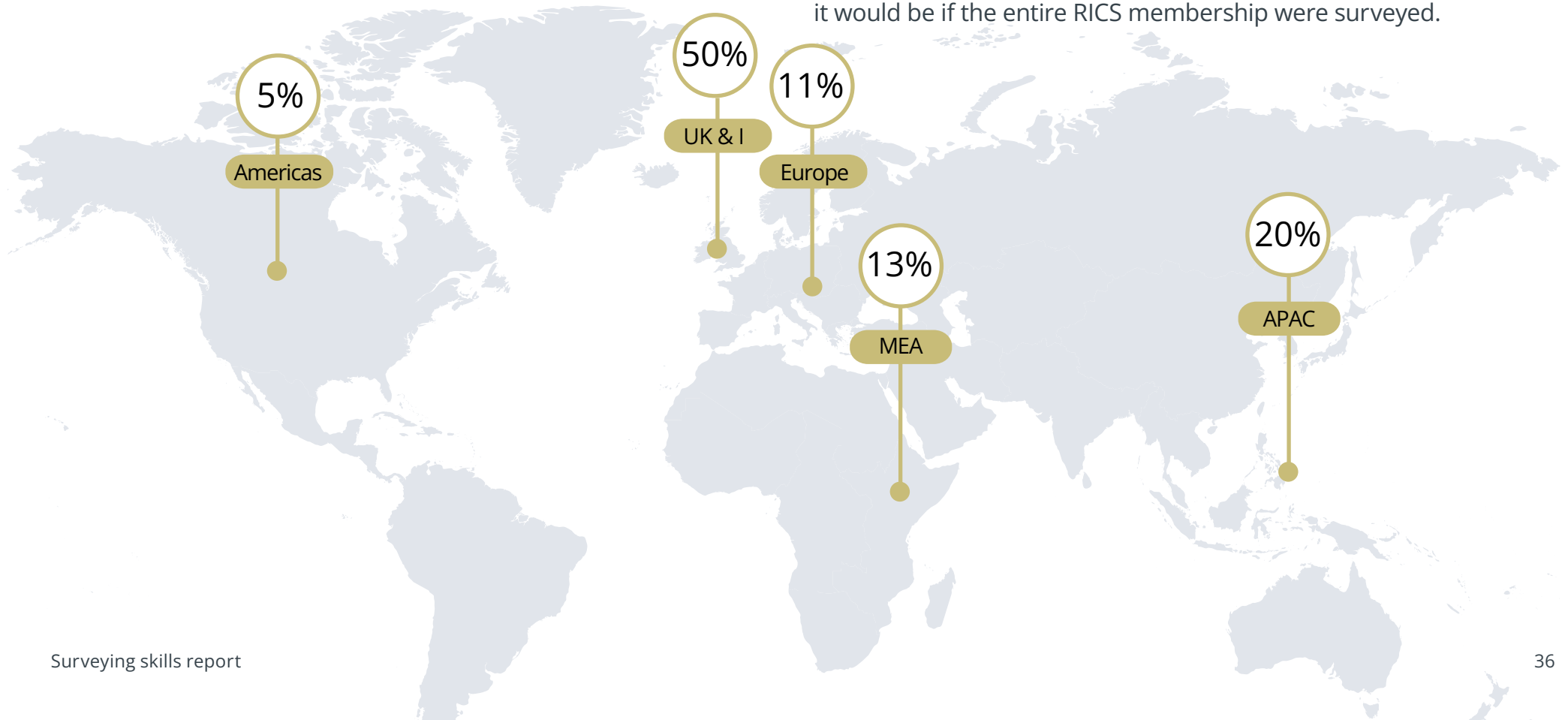
Appendix A Demographic data

The survey was conducted by Savanta, an independent research agency. A total of 3,698 responses were received from RICS members. The survey was conducted online between June to August 2026. Data were weighted to be representative of RICS' membership by region, member grade and age.

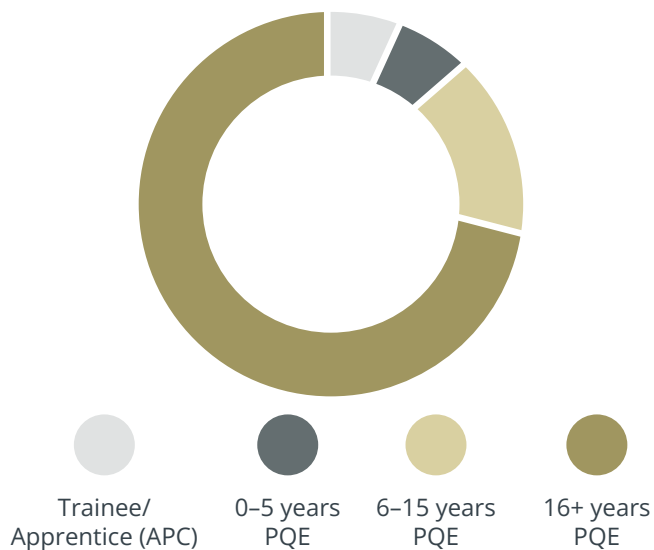
During weighting, the profile of the survey respondents is compared to the profile of the total RICS membership on region, member grade and age.

This identifies where there are discrepancies between the two, i.e. where a particular group is over- or under-represented in the data. A statistical technique is then used to give these respondents proportionately greater or lower influence on the results, i.e. they have more or less 'weight' in the data.

For example, if the proportion of people aged 18–34 responding to the survey is lower than the proportion of RICS members aged 18–34, 18–34 respondents will be given a higher weight in the data. This means that their contribution to the total is equivalent to what it would be if the entire RICS membership were surveyed.



Professional experience



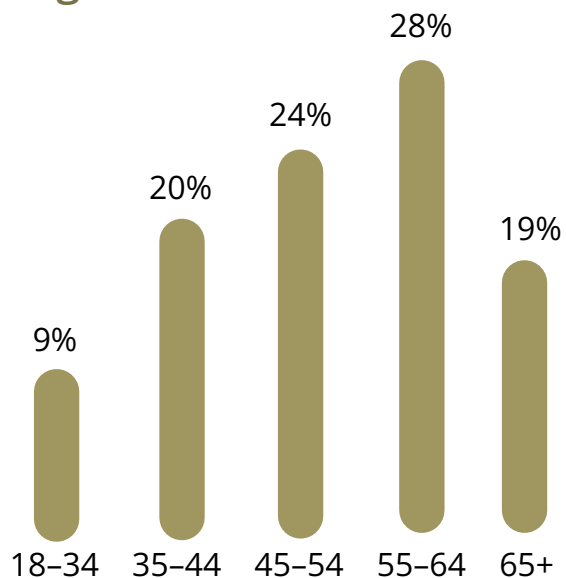
Organisation size

28%	Very large organisation (>1,000 employees)
13%	Large organisation (250-999 employees)
16%	Medium organisation (50-249 employees)
14%	Small organisation (10-49 employees)
16%	Very small organisation (2-9 employees)
11%	Sole traders
2%	Don't know

Gender

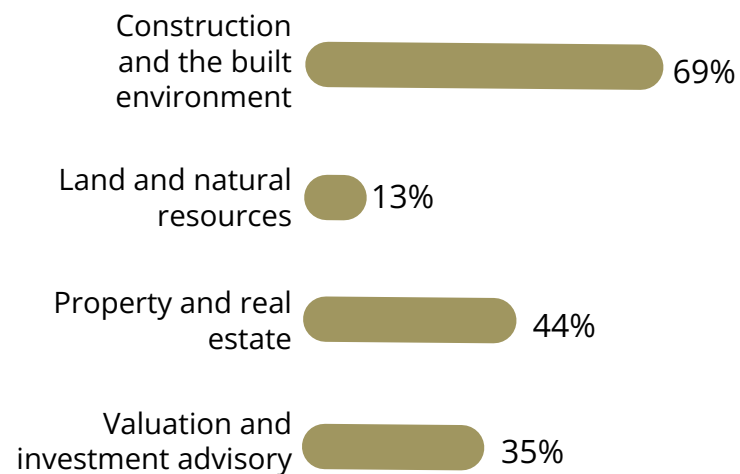
18%	Women
79%	Men
4%	Not stated

Age

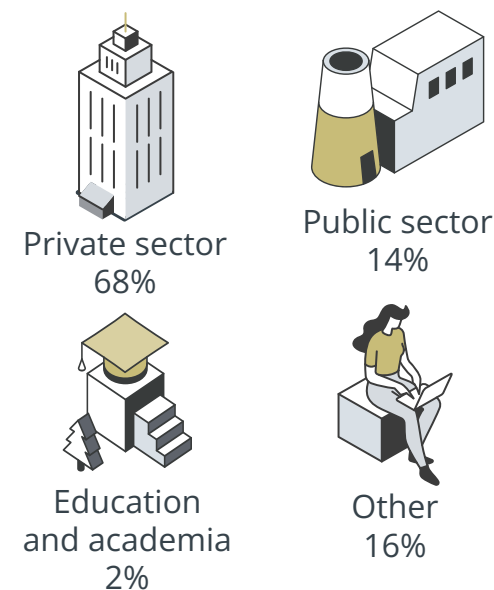


Surveying skills report

Professional sphere (multiple choice)



Public/private sector



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.

Enquiries
contactrics@rics.org



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