

REPORT



Surveying skills report 2025

Headline survey results and next steps

October 2025

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Foreword

For over 150 years, RICS members have advanced our understanding of the built and natural environments. We are involved in every aspect of our changing world through planning, valuing, funding, advising and delivering real estate, land and construction.

To guarantee that the profession is fit for the future, it is critical to develop new talent while retaining and upskilling those already working in the sector. This means ensuring that there are routes into the profession for people with the right knowledge, ambition and drive to join us – whatever stage of their career they are currently at.

As an adviser and as a business leader, I have seen the huge value that emerges from unlocking potential. Boosting our profession is not about numbers; it is about capitalising on exciting technological innovation and transformation, and the sustainability agenda, to ensure that anybody who is able to and passionate about contributing to our sector has the opportunity to do so.

I have been extraordinarily lucky to be able to practise all over the world during my more-than-30-year career, including some extremely technical cases in the UK as well as some jurisdictionally and geographically complicated projects in the Middle East and Africa. But as many surveyors will say, it is the variety of people I have met that has really provided some of the highlights of my professional life.

As we continue to be confronted by an ever-growing list of challenges, there has never been a more important time to join our profession.



Nicholas Maclean OBE RD FRICS IRRV (Hons)
Acting RICS President

This is a time to become involved in a sector confronted by many of the important political topics of the day: supply and affordability of housing, infrastructure, new methods of construction, sustainability, flow of cross-border investment, AI, use of our ocean resources – all issues with which surveyors around the world are involved.

This research marks the beginning of a new conversation with RICS members and our wider community. I am struck by how consistent the results are, highlighting the extent of our opportunity to impact on the delivery of critical projects and the themes identified by current professionals regarding the way forward.

Taking a lead from this, we have a shared responsibility to act now to help meet the needs of the communities and places we shape.

Executive summary

RICS' latest research into skills across the surveying profession (the global skills survey, conducted in conjunction with Savanta) provides further evidence that surveying skills are currently in short supply.

Industry professionals told us about the impact that skills shortages are already having, from reducing capacity and increasing costs to holding innovation back.

The survey results also confirm that the core skills of surveying professionals are rapidly changing and will continue to do so over the coming years.

As well as equipping existing surveyors with the means to respond to emerging challenges, there is an urgent need to make the profession more attractive to future generations. The results highlight a breadth of ways in which the surveying and wider built and natural environment sectors can showcase what they have to offer.

This could mean improving access to high-quality internships and apprenticeships, making career pathways more visible and sharing more information on specific career benefits.

No organisation can achieve this alone. It will require collaboration between the education sector, professional bodies and industry, alongside government, to deliver on these goals and futureproof the sector.

Looking ahead, the way in which surveyors work – as with many other professions – will need to adapt to keep up with the pace of technological and sustainable innovation.

This research is a foundation for RICS' continued work to improve our understanding of where we need to invest most, so that surveyors can thrive in the years and decades to come.

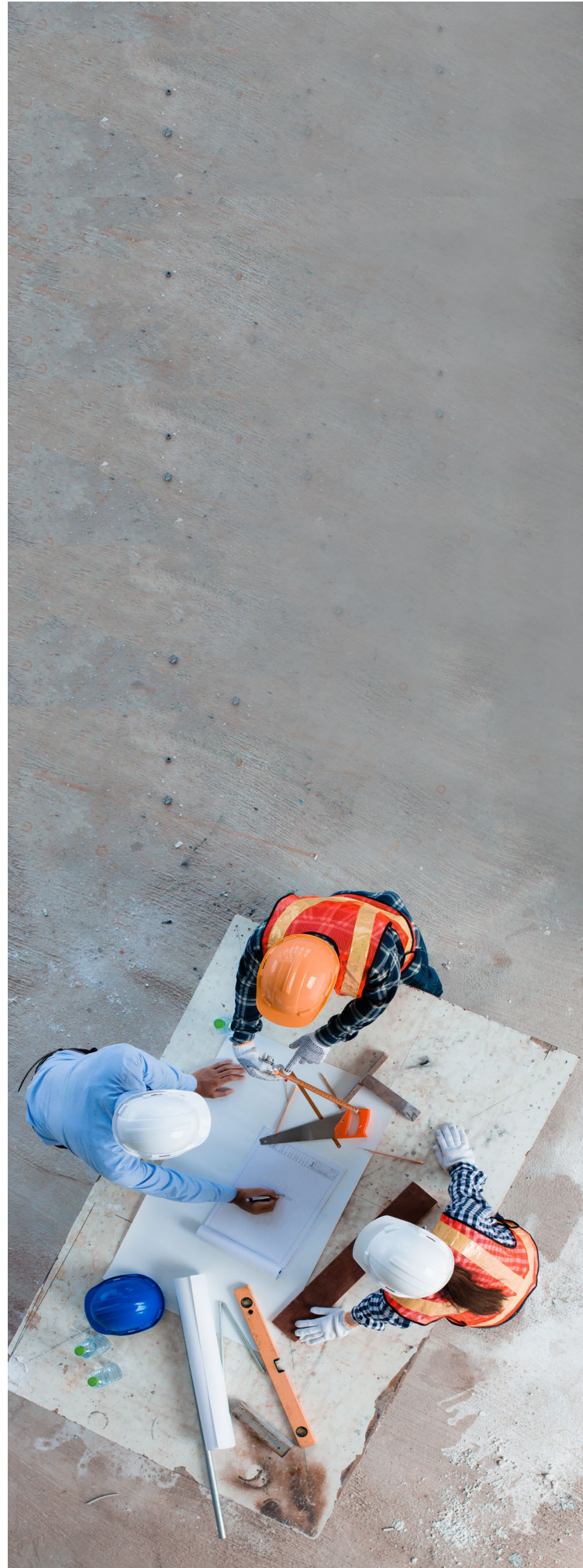
1 Introduction

The built and natural environment sectors make a significant contribution to world economic activity. In the UK, for example, construction and the built environment sector are [estimated to account for around 20% of GDP](#). Given the pivotal role of the industry and the professionals working in it, it is critical that there is a strong and resilient workforce to deliver on its ambitions.

RICS is building a programme to better understand how to respond to existing and growing skills shortages, which are already hampering some areas of work and limiting growth.

To drive this agenda, we conducted our first global skills survey of members working across all surveying disciplines and around the world. Our aim was to better understand the actual and perceived skills gaps, to support us in ensuring that current and future members are equipped to meet the requirements of an evolving industry.

A total of 2,339 RICS members responded to the survey. Their responses are weighted according to age, membership grade and region, to be representative of RICS' global membership.



2 Current landscape

There is an intersection of challenges facing both the surveying profession and the broader built and natural environment sectors. Most notably, ageing populations are beginning to put pressure on labour supply in major economies around the globe, leading to widespread skills shortages.

When responding to this, much of the discussion has traditionally focused on what might be best described as the building trades. However, the challenge is far greater than this, being also very visible among professionals (such as surveyors) working in the sectors.

In order to understand the scale of the current skills predicament, as well as its impact on the built and natural environments and the wider economy, the survey included several headline questions designed to investigate the underlying nature of the problem.

Figure 1 shows that 27% of respondents indicated the skills shortage is at a critical level. A further 60% suggested it is providing a challenge for businesses, albeit one that is manageable for now.

This picture was reflected consistently across all disciplines. Building surveying, quantity surveying and residential are the areas experiencing the most significant shortages according to the feedback, but the share of respondents from these disciplines describing the situation as severe is only marginally larger than in other areas of practice.

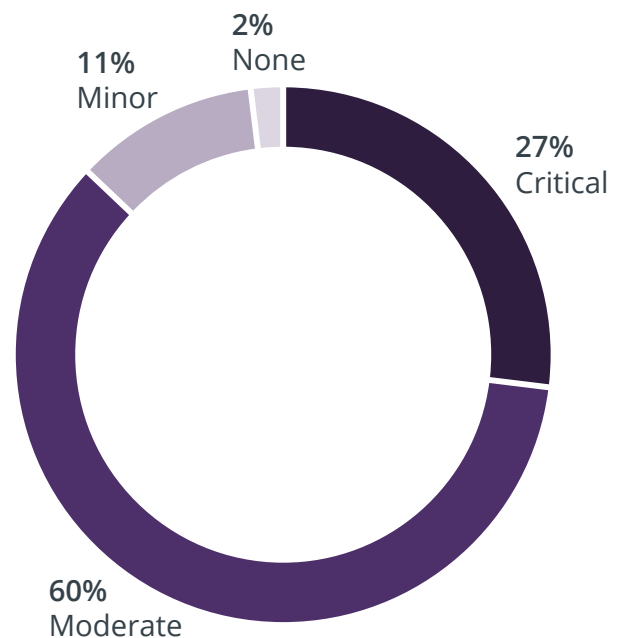


Figure 1: What impact, if any, do you think a shortage of skills is having on your industry/profession?

A similar picture emerges when looking at skills shortages geographically. The survey results were categorised into four broad regions – the Americas, Asia Pacific (APAC), Europe, and the Middle East and Africa (MEA) – as well as the UK. In each case, between 20% and 30% saw the skills shortage as critical, with only 6% indicating that it was having no impact.

A follow-up question was included to provide some insight into how the skills shortage is manifesting itself. The results are shown in Figure 2.

The most frequent response was that it is impacting the amount of work that can be undertaken, signalling a broader capacity constraint, and this issue was cited to a greater extent by respondents from the Americas and MEA.

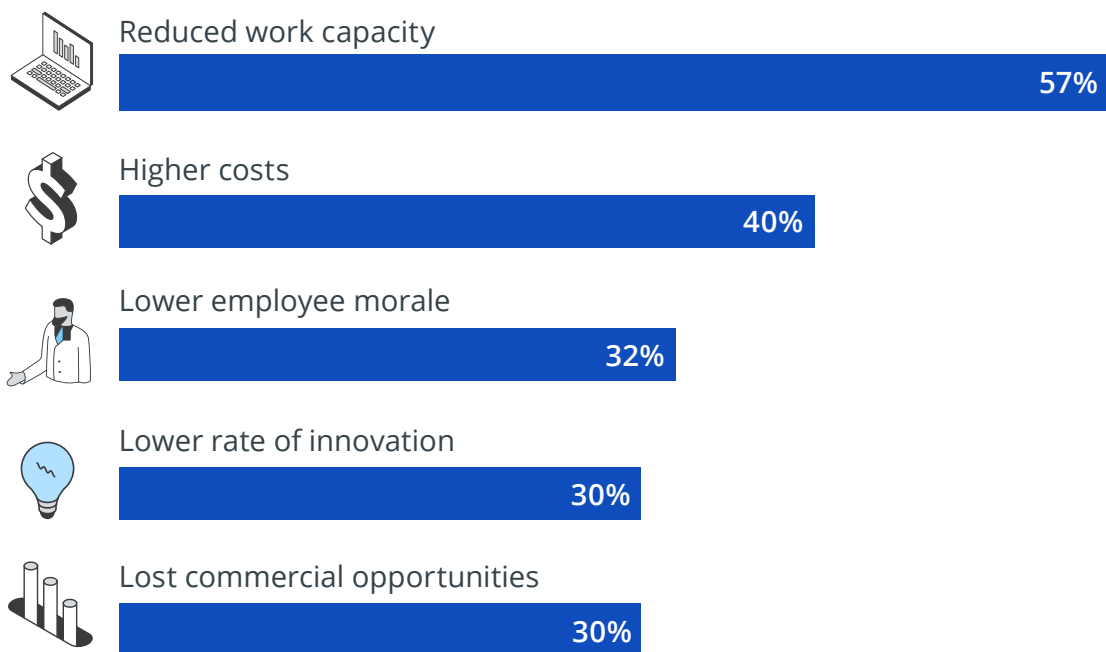


Figure 2: How, if at all, is the skills shortage impacting your work?



Figure 3 shows the percentage of global respondents in each discipline who stated that the skills shortage is leading to reduced work capacity, ranging from 68% of those in quantity surveying and construction to 51% in residential.

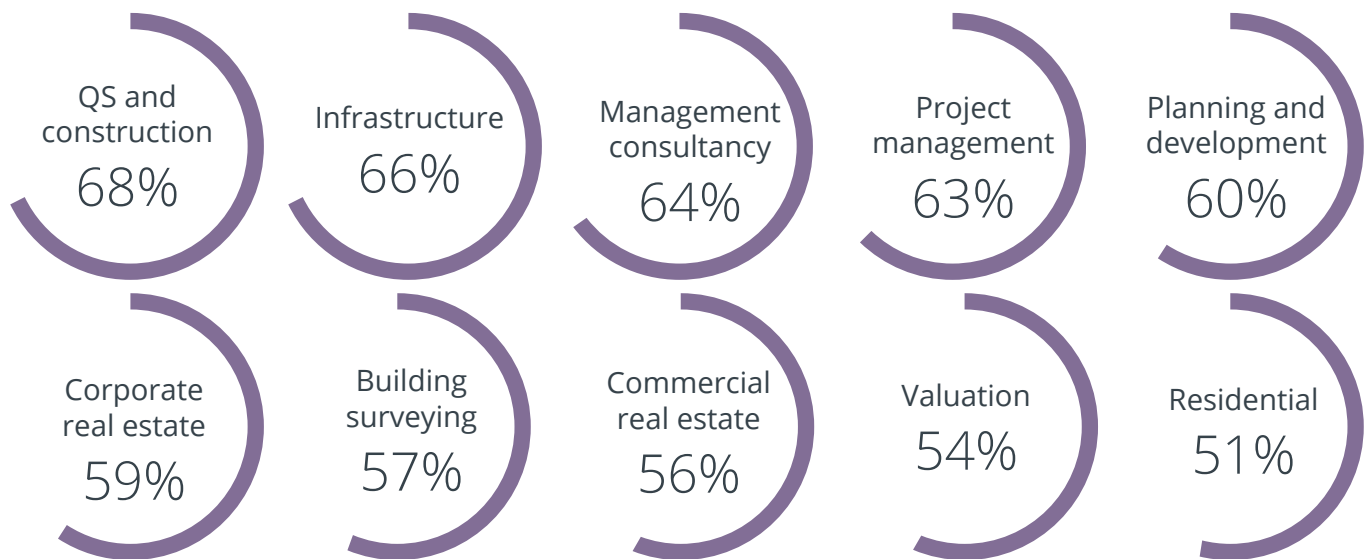


Figure 3: How, if at all, is the skill shortage impacting your work? (Percentage of respondents in each area saying that the skills shortage is reducing work capacity)

Meanwhile, other respondents focused on the effects on costs resulting from the lack of skilled professionals.

It is interesting to note that the shortage is resulting in a lower level of innovation, which is a critical issue for the longer term growth of both the industry and the wider economy.

‘Much more needs to be urgently done by all stakeholders (government, employers, representative bodies and universities) to promote and support the apprenticeship schemes for the built environment to ensure that we will meet the skills shortage requirements in our sector.’

David Hourihan MSc Prop Invest FCSI FRICS
 RICS Governing Council
 Head of School, University of the Built Environment

In trying to understand the reasons for the skills shortage, ageing demographics and a failure to fully replace people leaving the profession with new entrants were viewed by RICS members as being particularly significant. Figure 4 demonstrates this clearly.

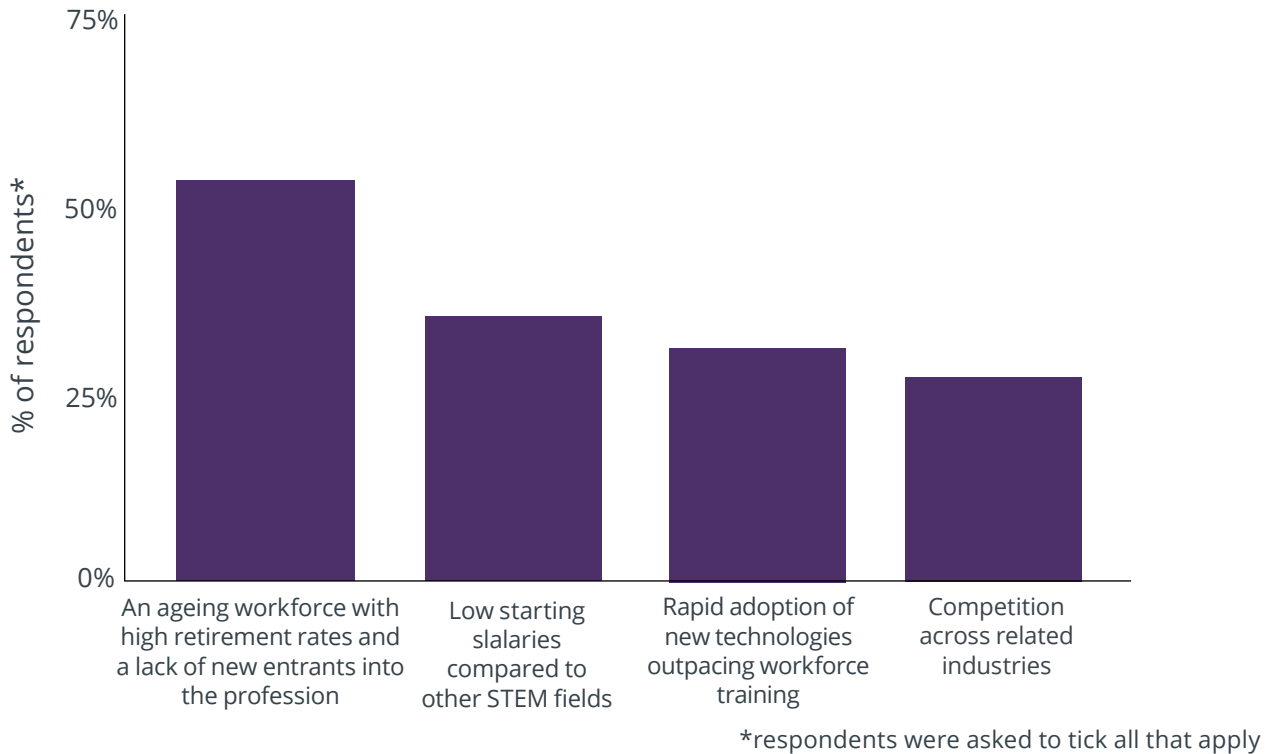


Figure 4: In your opinion, what are the key drivers behind skills shortages in your sector? (Top four responses)

Concerns about demographic issues were particularly marked in the building surveying sector, where this subject was raised by two-thirds of respondents. However, other disciplines reflected a broadly similar pattern. Geographically, this concern was highlighted more often by respondents in the UK than elsewhere.

Despite the hugely important role that RICS members play in helping to address the big issues of the day, the survey results suggest there are challenges in attracting sufficient new talent to the sector. Some responses drew attention to lower starting salaries in the profession compared to other STEM fields, as well as broader competition from other industries. Relative starting salaries were unsurprisingly seen as more problematic in the younger cohorts of respondents; around half of those in the 17 to 34 age band highlighted this factor. It was also raised more frequently by those from MEA and, to a lesser extent, the Americas.

The other issue highlighted in the survey relates to the pace of technological change and the fact that in some circumstances it is outrunning the training available to equip professionals with the requisite skills.

Interestingly, this was seen as less of a problem in the UK than elsewhere, with only 24% of UK respondents identifying this as an obstacle.

3 Addressing the skills shortfall

There are several aspects to addressing the skills shortage.

One key factor is the complexity of attracting new talent into the profession.

Another is the benefit to be gained from upskilling the existing workforce.

In terms of the former, Figure 5 shows what respondents felt was the most effective way for RICS and RICS-regulated firms to collaborate in order to attract younger generations to the profession.

While there is no single answer, the feedback points to greater focus on internships and apprenticeships as being particularly productive approaches.

Better promotion of roles and careers across the built and natural environment sectors was also a recurring theme. Highlighting potential career pathways was mentioned by more than half of respondents, as well as providing information on career benefits (46%) and, interestingly, examples of success stories and positive role models (38%).

Although there was a high level of consistency across regions, for the UK focusing on apprenticeships and highlighting career pathways were seen as particularly important, while mentorship programmes were rated relatively highly in the results from the Americas and MEA. Ensuring that the curriculum is kept up to date is understandably an issue that attracts a sizeable amount of attention around the globe.



Figure 5: How best can RICS and the sector collaborate to attract younger generations to the profession? Approaches are ranked by the level of respondent endorsement

In a separate set of questions, the emphasis shifted to the issue of upskilling.

Almost half of those responding to the survey (45%) indicated that this is an important part of addressing the skills shortage. The positive feedback on this issue was particularly pronounced in Europe and the Americas, and slightly less so in the UK – though still significant at 42%. For the UK specifically, the responses to this question did not differ markedly between different areas of surveying, but were a little higher than average in both the residential and project management disciplines.

The upskilling issue in the survey was addressed in two parts.

First, respondents were asked which core skills could be strengthened, particularly in relatively new entrants to the profession. The results indicated that there is most scope to improve the knowledge base in business skills (such as communication, negotiation and report writing), technical expertise (surveying practice), commercial acumen and financial awareness (see Figure 6).

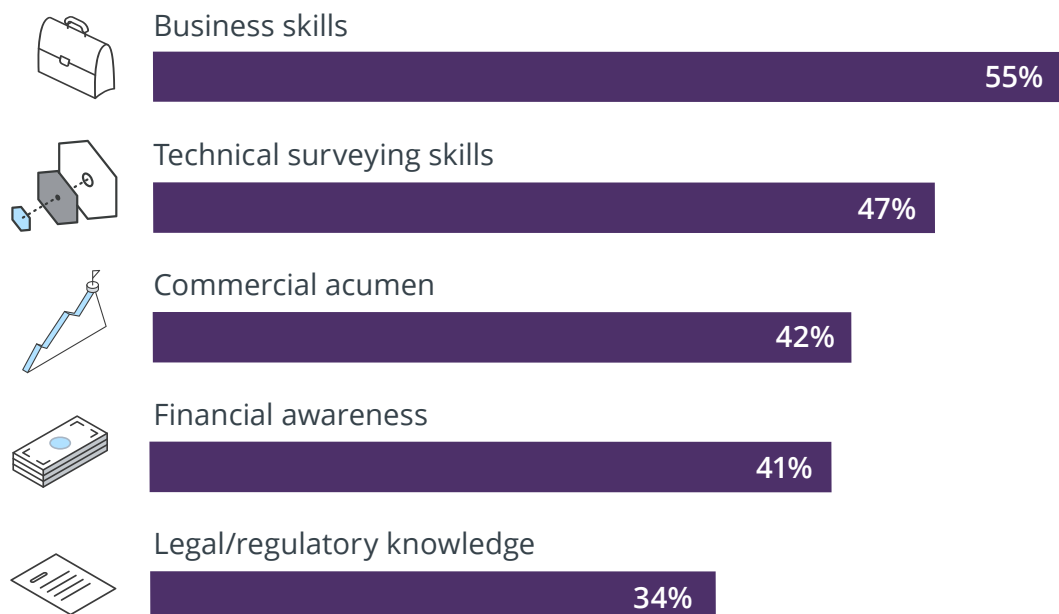


Figure 6: What key skills, if any, do you find lacking in new entrants to the profession?

Second, respondents were asked about the emerging skills that will need to be acquired to reflect the changing nature of the sector. The results are presented in section 4.

'The construction industry is facing a shortage of project managers. At the same time, new roles like BIM coordinators, BIM managers and sustainability consultants are becoming more common.'

Sayde Jude

Data Analyst

Currie & Brown USA

4 Future skills

The skills that surveyors will require are set to change markedly over the coming years. To help understand how the competencies of professionals working in the built and natural environments might evolve, the global skills survey included a question specifically addressing this issue. The headline results presented in Figure 7 are based on respondents identifying what they believe to be the top three emerging skills, ranked in order of importance.

On this basis, 59% cited advanced digital tools, such as AI and machine-based learning, as a key area. Sustainability and decarbonisation was ranked second (41%), closely followed by data analytics and big data management.

When breaking down the results by surveying discipline, advanced digital tools were considered the most important by those working in management consultancy and infrastructure. In contrast, the highest rankings for sustainability and decarbonisation were found in building surveying and commercial real estate, and among respondents from the UK and Europe.

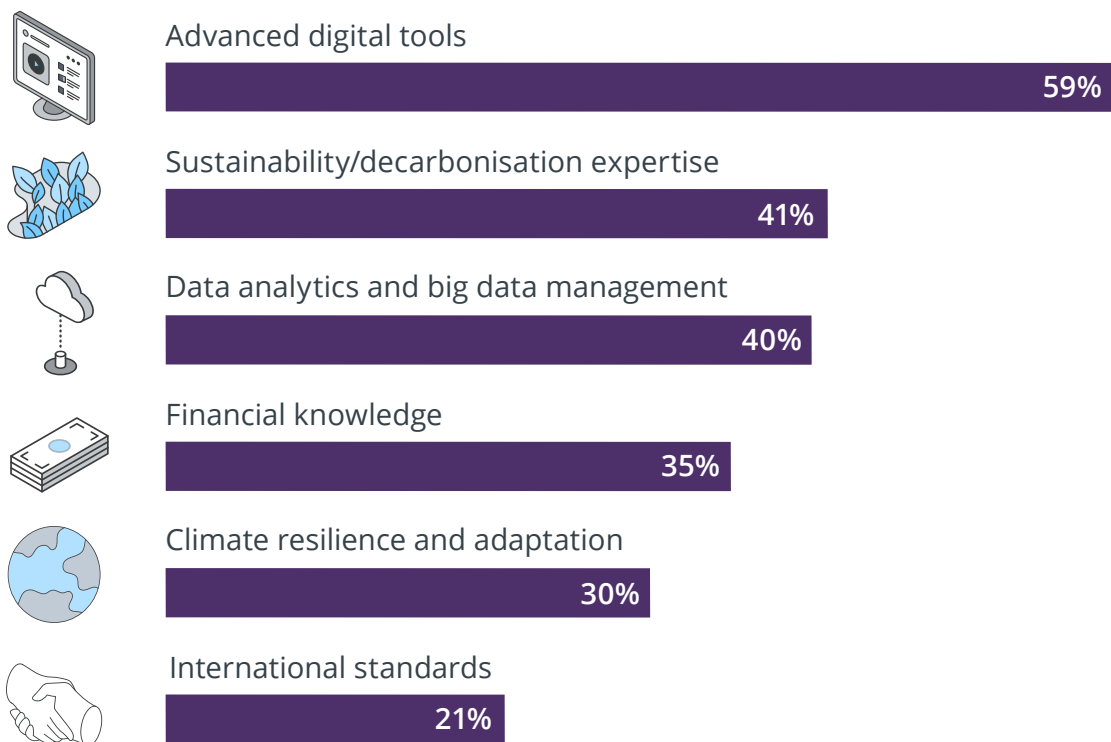


Figure 7: What emerging skills do you think will be most important for surveyors in the next 5–10 years? (Respondents were asked to tick up to three ranked)

One particularly significant and encouraging angle to the contributions received was the widespread conviction that the advance of technology (whether in the form of digital tools or data) will help surveyors deliver greater value for clients in the future (see Figure 8).

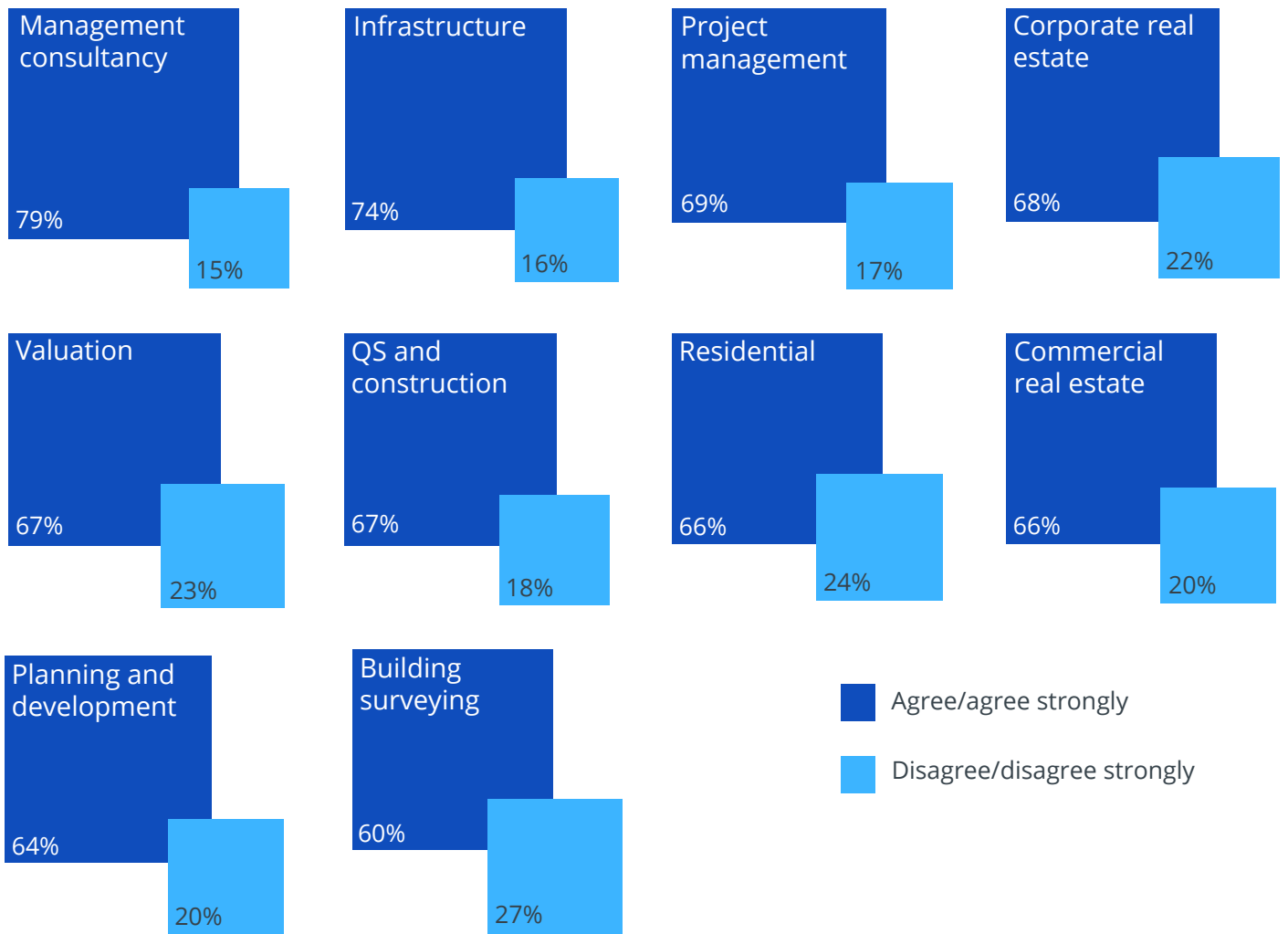


Figure 8: AI will help surveyors deliver greater value in the future. To what extent do you agree or disagree with this statement? (Percentages of respondents answering 'don't know' are not shown)

Upskilling professionals in construction is critical to improving productivity. RICS has a crucially important role to play in this area.'

Kevin Brogan FRICS FAPI
 RICS Australasia Chair

In total, two-thirds of respondents agreed that AI will help surveyors deliver greater value, with only 4% disagreeing strongly. Perceptions of AI's benefits for the profession were particularly positive among respondents working in management consultancy (79%) and among those aged 17 to 34 (81%). However, positive responses exceeded 60% in every discipline, demonstrating how the profession is embracing this new technology.

The strength of the feedback on this question is a signal that the profession already understands the opportunities that AI will deliver, as well as the reality of how teams will need to individually build skills in this area.

To follow up, the survey also included two questions about the challenges associated with the adoption of AI and how respondents felt about it. Both were framed from a personal perspective, and respondents were asked to what extent they agreed with the following statements.

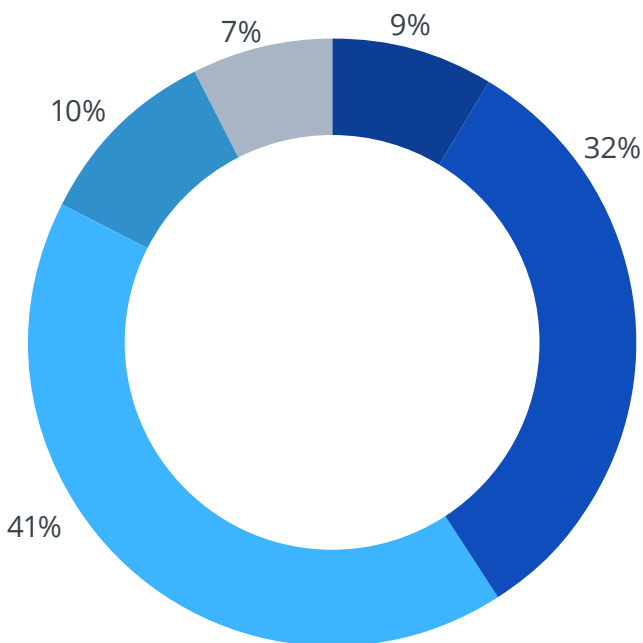
- I have concerns about the impact of AI on my own role.
- I feel overwhelmed by how quickly technology is changing the surveying profession.

In the case of the former, 51% rejected the assertion, while 56% rejected the latter. Fewer than 10% of respondents had strong concerns about the impact of AI and technology on their role and on the profession.

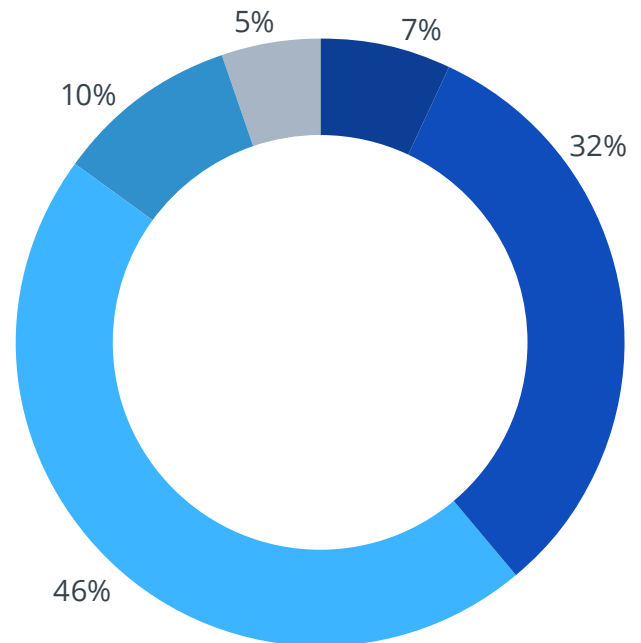
‘Surveyors need to develop skills that go beyond traditional cost management, being digitally proficient and fluent in both financial and carbon metrics to ensure that carbon is embedded as the second currency of construction.’

Rachel Coleman

Associate Director, Research Analyst
Turner & Townsend



I have concerns about the impact of AI on my own role



I feel overwhelmed by how quickly technology is changing the surveying profession

Agree strongly
 Agree
 Disagree
 Disagree strongly
 Don't know

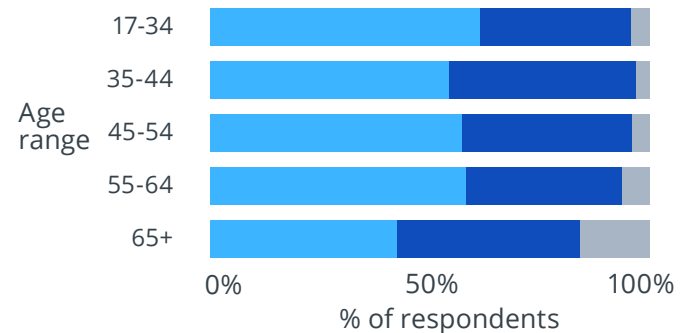
Figure 9: The extent to which respondents agreed or disagreed with the statements shown

Reflecting the greater willingness of the younger cohort to see the value of AI, they also show a greater propensity to disagree with both statements. 57% of the 17 to 34 year-old age group stated that they disagreed with the statement regarding concerns about their own role and 62% disagreed that they felt overwhelmed (see Figure 10).

It is interesting that the only professional sphere where there was majority agreement (56%) with the first statement was education and academia.

In contrast, close to two-thirds of respondents working on the developer and client side disagreed with that statement; it was also the sector in which concerns about being overwhelmed by the speed of technological change were least prevalent.

I feel overwhelmed by how quickly technology is changing the surveying profession



I have concerns about the impact of AI on my own role

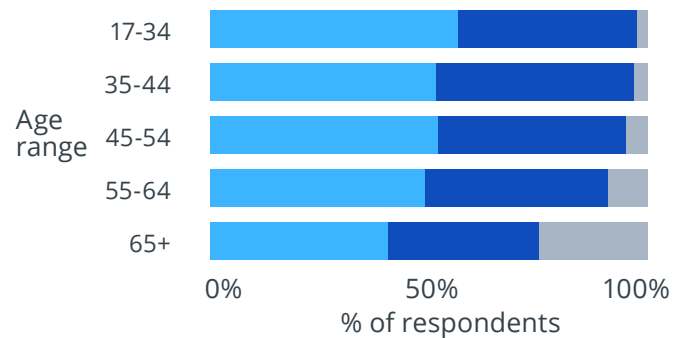


Figure 10: The extent to which respondents agreed or disagreed with the statements shown, by age

Government and RICS initiatives have reconnected us to young candidates, giving them access to apprenticeships and traineeships, such as T-levels, which has helped broaden the entry pathway. The skills shortage affects all aspects of their development.'

Lee Hatwell FRICS
Director
Munday & Cramer

'The sustainability agenda requires a strong foundation of skilled surveying professionals. Addressing the shortage of talent in this field is crucial to delivering sustainable infrastructure and housing that meets the needs of current and future generations.'

John Newton MRICS

Chair of EU Sustainability Working Group

'There is not widespread understanding of the careers on offer, entry pathways remain very narrow and arguably exclusive, and there is not a single voice promoting the benefits and importance of a career in the built environment. There is an opportunity for industry bodies and trade groups to come together to promote a real estate career in schools from an early age to broaden its appeal.'

Nick Knight MRICS

Chair, RICS Valuation Professional Group Panel

Managing Director, UK Lines of Business CBRE Ltd

5 Conclusion

Huge global challenges orientated around the built and natural environment sectors urgently need to be addressed, but it will be impossible to do so against the backdrop of widespread skills shortages. This research was commissioned to support RICS in understanding the landscape of the skills gap as we face these challenges.

There is no question that the skills gap in surveying is having an impact, and the effect on capacity is the most pressing concern. The challenges of an ageing workforce and a need for more people to join the profession are overlaid with the complexities of rising demand and evolving pressures within the profession.

The ability of surveyors to meet the demands of the industry and the wider public is a far-reaching and critical issue, with implications across the built and natural environment sectors.

With the industry as a whole seeking to increase pace, we must be clear in our message that there are a large number of professional roles to be filled alongside those in the trades.

Widening the pool of potential surveyors by making the profession more attractive to new entrants is going to be critical.

The encouraging aspect to the survey results is that those currently in the profession are eager to acquire new skills that will equip them for the future.

So, the question stands: what steps must we in industry take to resolve the dual problems of the current crisis and the developing needs of future built and natural environments?

Many of the answers identified in this survey are familiar ones: a desire for a greater emphasis on apprenticeships, better promotion of surveying careers, a wider range of mentoring opportunities and more effective training programmes. These initiatives are underway, but they are not working fast enough.

The message from survey respondents is unequivocal: RICS, industry, governments and academia must collaborate more effectively if we are to enhance the appeal of surveying.

By working together, we can drive solutions and ready the profession for this challenge.



6 Next steps

This isn't the beginning of the journey, but it's a turning point.

For those of us who have been engaged in closing the skills gap for a long time, this report will largely cement what we knew to be true.

For me, its findings initially represented a moment to reflect. For the first time, we're armed with data that specifically relates to the surveying profession. We must use it to inform our next steps.

There is a huge challenge ahead – we cannot downplay the scale of this issue. I'm encouraged, however, by the volume of initiatives and partnerships already underway, the many people from across our industry who are passionate about the cause, and the scope for accelerating results, knowing what we now do.



Justin Young

Chief Executive Officer, RICS

Joining the profession

We must raise the profile of surveying, open new talent pipelines and ensure that the profession is an open and welcoming place when new talent arrives.

We're investing in making the surveying profession more inclusive. RICS is part of a collaborative group of built and natural environment professional bodies – the [B.E. Inclusive initiative](#) – who have signed a memorandum of understanding committing to a joint action plan for diversity, equity and inclusion through to 2030. A core part of this action plan is the talent pipeline and working collectively to address gaps and improve access to the industry at all levels.

Meanwhile, a major review of the education and qualification standards and methodology of our entry and assessment process is underway. Our goal is to make the process of joining RICS fairer, clearer and more inclusive, while maintaining the necessary rigour of assessment. We must ensure that the road to RICS membership is open to all with the aptitude and appetite, facilitating social mobility and inclusion for all. The removal of unnecessary barriers is essential.

There are also numerous initiatives in place already to introduce the surveying profession to young people as an exciting and viable career path. From our engagement with policy makers to our STEM ambassador programme for schools, this is a significant focus and will continue to be.

Upskilling

New members of our profession will shore up the ranks of our established pathways, but they will also take on new challenges as we upskill for the future. What's more, the survey data points to a real appetite for upskilling and self-development among current surveyors, a testament to the ongoing pursuit of excellence among our members and to their drive to use their skills and expertise with impact. There is a need to adapt as both technology and the environment change, and there is an imperative to better equip existing professionals with the skills they need for the future.

In August, RICS announced two proposed new pathways, on residential retrofit and sustainability, with plans for a possible third pilot programme in 2026. Also, effective from 9 March 2026, the [Responsible use of artificial intelligence in surveying practice](#) professional standard will protect and support both members and the wider public. Artificial intelligence is here to stay, and – the data tells us – RICS must continue to ensure that the surveying profession is empowered to adapt appropriately.

RICS has announced a new partnership with the University of Cambridge Institute for Sustainability Leadership (CISL) through an eight-week [Sustainable Real Estate course](#). We are also working with the Association of Accounting Technicians to develop a [Business Finance Basics course](#). This is intended to equip members with skills in the fundamentals of business finance. The course covers key topics such as the basics of budgeting, cash flow and financial statements, equipping members early on with the administrative skillset required to grow a business and make sound decisions.

This is not an exhaustive list of our work in this area, but it is indicative of the types of advancement underway at RICS.

A collective effort

However, looking at the data we now have, we must acknowledge that these initiatives are not working as well as they need to. We have to change our approach.

The true lesson of this report, undoubtedly, is that the challenges at play are multifaceted, and the work to resolve them requires involvement from right across our sphere of influence.

RICS is now working to gather further insight at a more local level, to understand the nuances of this data and the challenges that are unique to geographical regions and areas of practice.

Meanwhile, our arms are open to others engaged in this challenge. There is no question of the dedication of so many people working to expand capacity and build skills. Combining this new data with our past experience, it's clear that stepping up our role as a convenor is essential. We must bring together the plethora of initiatives across the built and natural environment sectors in order to reach a level of critical mass.

Across our membership, our industry, employers and professional bodies, academia and government, RICS' approach will be one of collaboration – we are pushing for a collective, data-led and powerfully unified road map. Join us.

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



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