

# State of the Profession 2025: International factsheet

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**RTPI**  
Royal Town  
Planning Institute



Career .....	1
Skills & training.....	2
Wellbeing .....	3
Greatest challenges .....	4
Who responded .....	5
Demographics .....	5
Geography.....	6
Sector .....	7
Appendix – Methodology.....	8

## State of the Profession: International factsheet

### Career

As in the four UK nations, the highest proportion of international respondents to our State of the Profession members’ survey reported working in development management, at 26.5%. This was followed by strategic planning (14.5%), urban design or master planning (12%), commercial, and housing (both 5.1%). The remaining individual areas of planning were selected by less than 5% of respondents, while 6% specified ‘other’. ‘Other’ areas included infrastructure, education, digital technology, and a mixture of multiple areas.

**Figure 1.** Most respondents worked in development management, strategic planning, or urban design

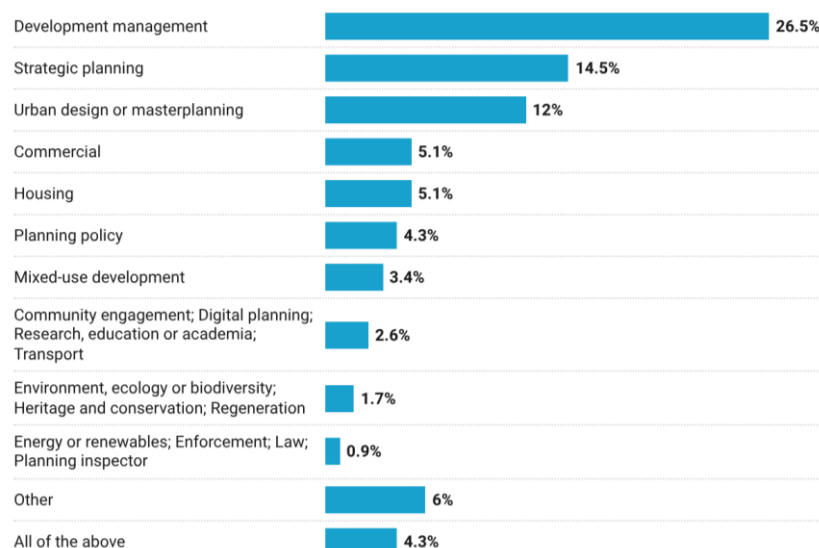
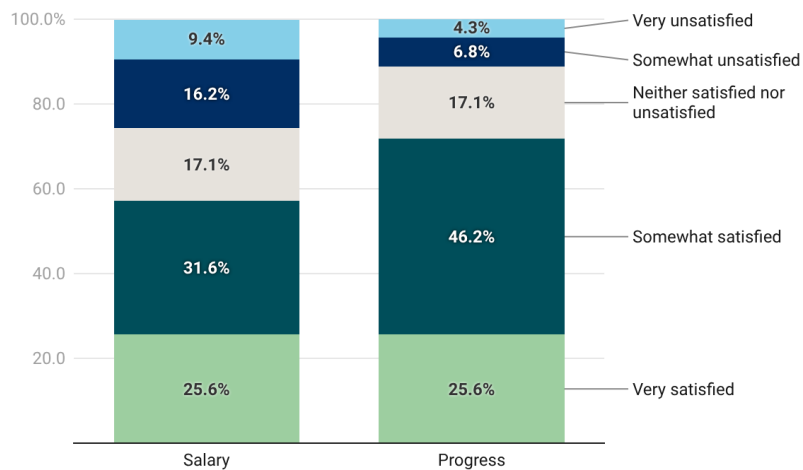


Chart: RTPI • Created with Datawrapper

The highest proportion of respondents held 31 or more years of experience in planning (29.1%), followed by 5-10 years (21.5%). Just under half of respondents (49.6%) had 21 or more years of experience. That said, there was a higher proportion of less experienced planners than among respondents in the UK. Among international respondents, a majority were somewhat or very satisfied with their salary (57.2%) and their progression (71.8%). The higher levels of satisfaction with progression than salary was a pattern shown across nations, both UK and international.

**Figure 2.** A majority were satisfied with their salary and their progression

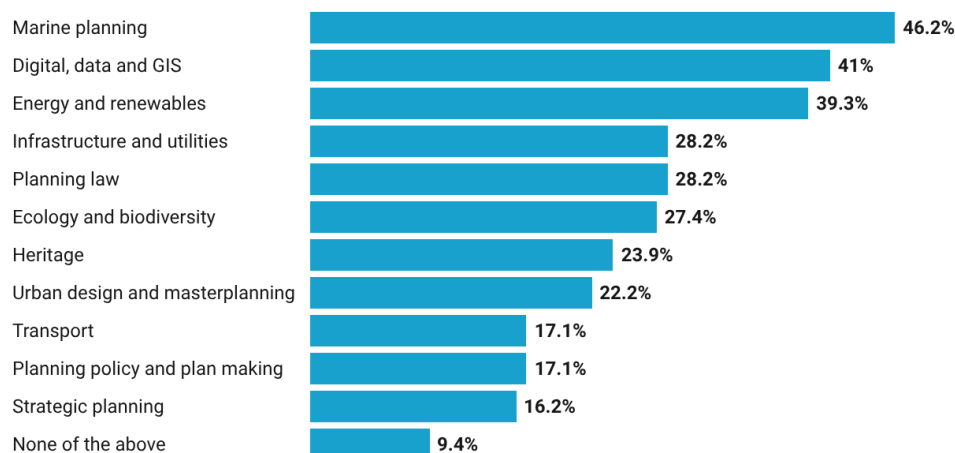


Source: RTPi • Created with Datawrapper

### Skills & training

When asked if they felt they had a skill or knowledge gap in any generic, or planning specific areas, the highest reported generic skills gap was business development (39.3%), followed by negotiation and mediation, and people management (30.8%; 23.1%). Around a fifth of respondents (20.5%) said they had a skill gap in project management, community engagement, or research.

**Figure 3.** Marine planning, digital and data, and energy and renewables were top reported skill or knowledge gaps



Note: As this question allowed multiple responses, percentages will not sum to 100%

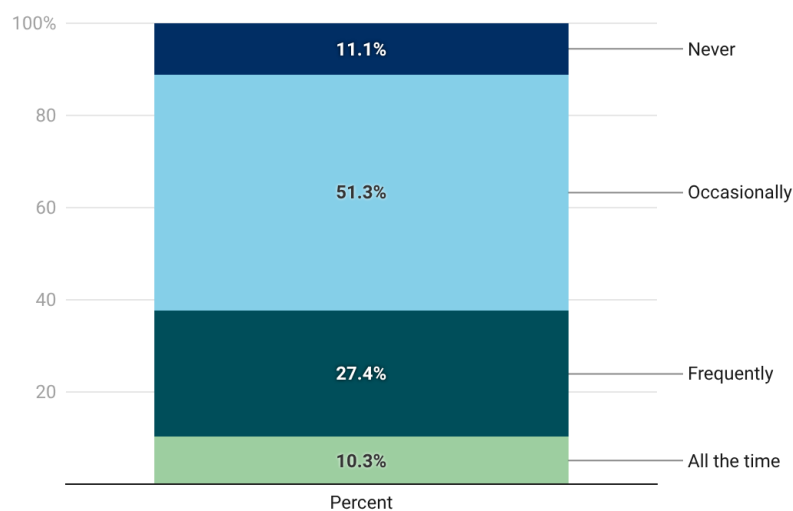
Source: RTPi • Created with Datawrapper

In planning specific areas, the most reported gaps were in marine planning (46.2%), digital, data and GIS (41%), and energy and renewables (39.3%). Both infrastructure and utilities and planning law were reported as skill or knowledge gaps by 28.2%. Just under half of respondents (47.9%) were somewhat or very satisfied with their training opportunities (compared to 31.6% somewhat or very unsatisfied).

## Wellbeing

A marginally higher proportion of respondents were somewhat or very pessimistic (39.3%) about the future direction of their planning system than were optimistic (36.8%). When asked how often their team lacked capacity to meet demand, just over half said they lacked capacity occasionally (51.3%), while 37.7% reported lacking capacity frequently, or all the time. A slightly higher proportion (42.8%) reported feeling personally overstretched frequently or all the time. The most reported reasons identified by international respondents for lacking capacity were high workloads (19.7%), followed by increased complexity (17.1%), and recruitment difficulties (11.1%).

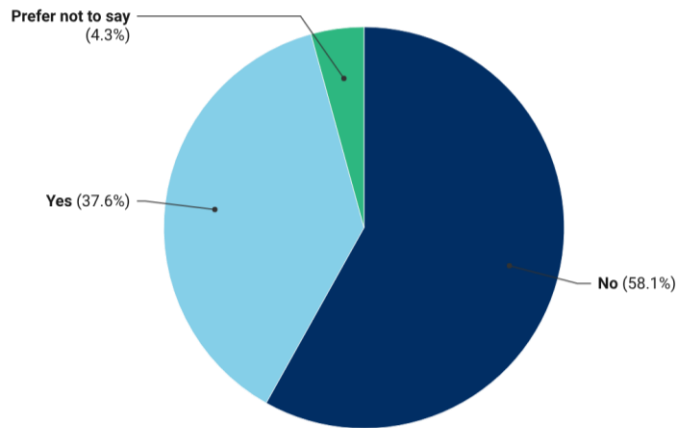
**Figure 4.** Less than half lacked capacity frequently or all the time



Source: RTPI • Created with Datawrapper

Among international member respondents, 37.6% reported having experienced abuse while working as a planner. This is notably lower than the 65% to 71% of members across UK nations who reported experiencing abuse. Around half (48.8%) of international respondents thought that the public had an unfavourable view of the planning profession. This was almost double the percentage who thought the public's perception of the planning profession was positive (24.8%). The reported effect of public perception on the wellbeing of respondents was relatively evenly split between a negative effect (32.5%), positive effect (34.2%), and no effect (33.3%).

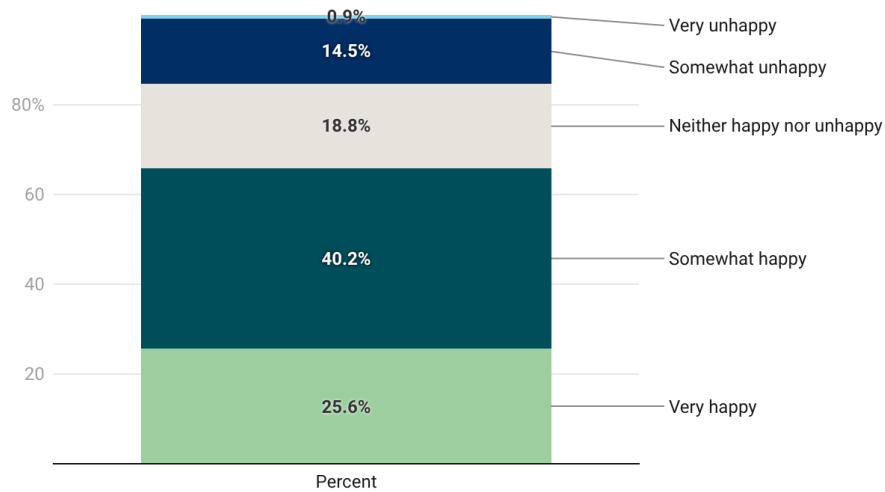
**Figure 5.** Most international respondents had not experienced abuse while working in planning



Source: RTPPI • Created with Datawrapper

Despite a significant minority reporting a lack of capacity, personal overstretch and a more negative than positive public perception of the profession, a sizeable majority of 65.8% of international respondents were happy working in planning.

**Figure 6.** A sizeable majority were happy working in planning



Source: RTPPI • Created with Datawrapper

### Greatest challenges

While there is a limit to how much can be generalised across international respondents, when asked what they thought was the greatest challenge facing the planning profession, there were some overarching themes. One of the primary concerns was climate change. In the words of a planner working in East Asia and the Pacific, the greatest challenge will be “delivering more inclusive, climate-resilient and affordable development in the face of rapid urban change” while “balancing growth pressures with social equity, sustainability, and the

need for stronger public trust in planning processes”. The level of public trust in the planning profession was thought important to help address the climate crisis, housing, and other issues. A local government planner in the Americas contended that “the profession is important in building communities (and housing)” and could be part of the solution, but “we're not doing that right now... leading us to become punching bags”.

International respondents were also grappling with the changing role of a planner. One strategic planner noted the increasing proportion of time taken for responsibilities such as “facilitating stakeholders and users to be engaged more in the planning process”. The place of innovation in planning was another area of challenge highlighted, balancing the use of new planning tech innovations like AI to improve placemaking with maintaining skills and engagement. A respondent in the Americas was concerned that the use of AI in planning needed “to be carefully monitored” so “critical thinking around land use and policy planning is not undermined”. In addition, privacy and data governance concerns meant they thought that “clear guidelines need to be established and use cases properly evaluated” for the use of AI in planning. Another respondent in the Americas was concerned about the potentially detrimental impact AI could have on how well graduate planners were able to apply research and analysis skills after graduating.

Economic downturns and market health were raised by several respondents, who feared that more difficult economic conditions could hinder progress in addressing housing and climate needs. The potential impact of such economic conditions on staffing was a concern across sectors, with private sector respondents concerned about lay-offs, and public sector respondents about the level of staffing and impacts on services if funding were squeezed (further, in some cases). Legislative uncertainty also featured, particularly the challenge of understanding legislative change and “assimilating planning reform” into daily practice.

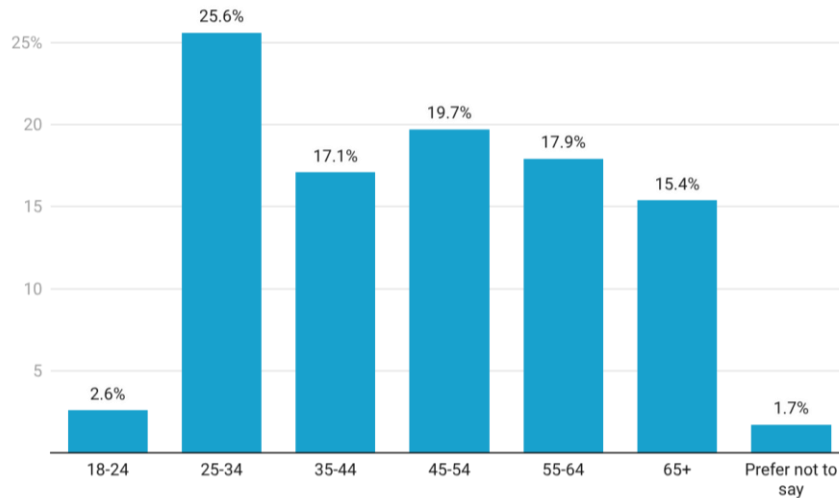
Among other challenges cited by international members were local politics affecting planning, an underfunded public sector, the capacity of planners, the uncertainty of reform and its effects on building, planners and investors, and public perception of the profession.

## **Who responded**

### **Demographics**

The gender profile of international respondents was skewed noticeably male (64.1%), while 32.5% identified as female, and 3.4% preferred not to disclose. Over a quarter of international respondents reported their age as between 25 and 34 (25.6%) and approaching a fifth were aged between 35 to 44, 45 to 54 and 55 to 64.

**Figure 7.** Age profile of international member respondents

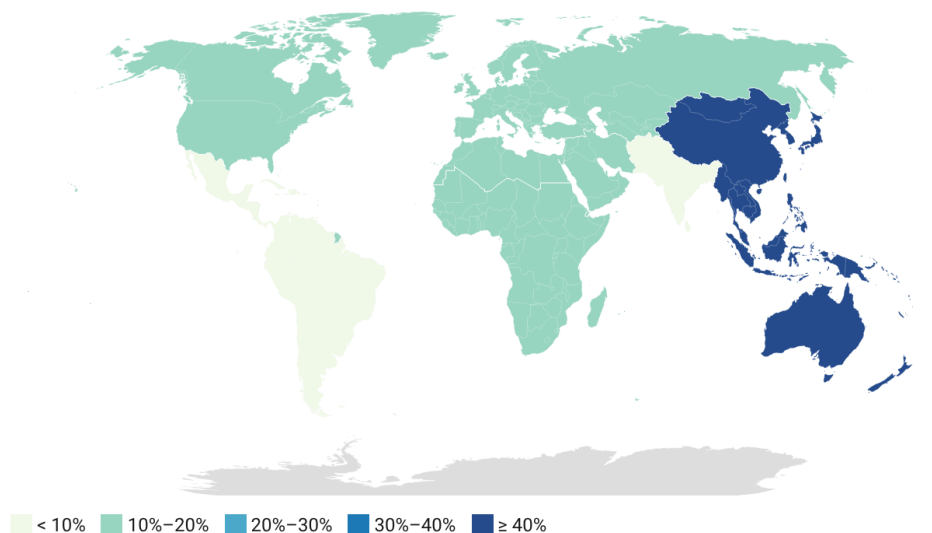


Source: RTPI • Created with Datawrapper

## Geography

Of international respondents to the State of the Profession member survey, the highest proportion (42.7%) worked in the East Asia and Pacific region. Most of these respondents reported Hong Kong, Australia or New Zealand as their home country. The next best represented global regions among international respondents were the Middle east and North Africa (13.7%), Sub-Saharan Africa (12.8%), Europe and Central Asia (11.1%), and North America (10.3%). South Asia (5.1%) and Latin America and the Caribbean (4.3%) accounted for the smallest proportions of respondents.

**Figure 8.** The most international respondents worked in East Asia and the Pacific

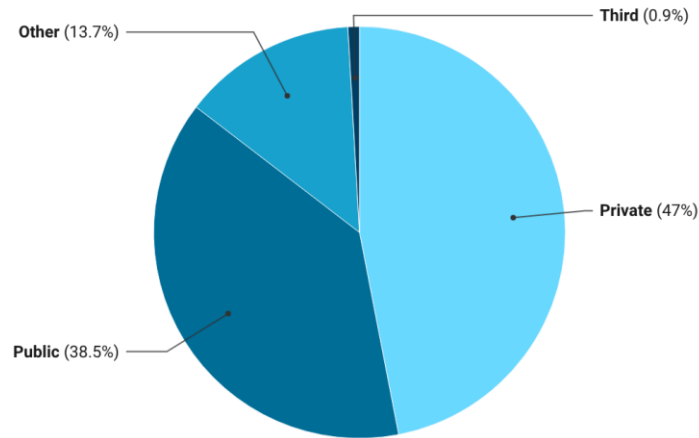


Map: RTPI • Created with Datawrapper

## Sector

Of international respondents, 47% worked in the private sector, while 38.5% worked in the public sector. Those who selected 'other' sectors (a mixture, freelance, on a career break, currently unemployed, or other) accounted for 13.7% of respondents, while the remainder worked in the third sector.

**Figure 9.** Broad sector of international member respondents



Source: RTPI • Created with Datawrapper

## **Appendix – Methodology**

The data in this report were collected using a survey of working RTPI members who reported working outside of the UK. The RTPI commissioned Research by Design, a market research firm to conduct the survey. Research by Design provided final survey data to RTPI anonymised, to maintain respondents' confidentiality.

Survey questions were designed in part to give similar or related outputs to the key outputs from the 2023 State of the Profession report, as well as to provide a baseline for future State of the Profession survey reports. The 2023 State of the Profession report used Office for National Statistics (ONS) Labour Force Survey (LFS) data, but due to a combination of occupation recoding by ONS, and low survey response rates for the LFS, the RTPI decided to design its own surveys to investigate the State of the Profession.

### **Members**

The member's survey ran for a month over summer 2025. The survey was sent to 22,382 members, and received 2,808 responses, which equates to a 12.5% response rate.

There were 193 responses from members working primarily internationally, 6.9% of the overall response. As we wanted to survey working planners with current experience of the planning system, retired members and full-time students were screened out.

For this factsheet, survey responses were filtered on a question asking "Which RTPI nation is the majority of your planning work for?" and only responses choosing "International" were analysed.

Members were asked questions about their career stage and career plans, personal skills gaps, resourcing in their workplace, working and volunteering practices, about their personal wellbeing, and demographics. Survey results represent a snapshot in time, and the survey was self-selecting, meaning responses may not be representative of the wider population.

### **Contact information**

For feedback or queries, contact [analysis@rtpi.org.uk](mailto:analysis@rtpi.org.uk)