

# AN INVESTIGATION:

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# GENDER EQUALITY IN THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT SECTOR

A report on the findings from our  
industry wide survey for  
International Women's Day 2025.

Cratus  
group



LPDF

Creating Places ■ Delivering Communities

# Table of Contents

Introduction	_____	<b>03</b>
Key findings	_____	<b>05</b>
What men said	_____	<b>07</b>
Recommendations	_____	<b>08</b>
Conclusion	_____	<b>11</b>

# Introduction

In celebration of International Women's Day 2025, Cratus Group, in partnership with the Land, Planning, and Development Federation (LPDF), is proud to present the results of our inaugural survey on **gender equality in the UK built environment sector.**

This report marks the baseline year for tracking the progress and challenges faced by women in our industry. Our ambition is to periodically repeat the survey to track what progress is – or isn't – being made across the sector.

This is part of our ongoing work to bettering ourselves and the sector when it comes to diversity and inclusion.

We were pleased that **over 220 people** completed the survey from across a wide range of businesses and different areas of the sector.

While it was open to people of all genders, **over 90% were women**, which demonstrates, unsurprisingly, that they remain more engaged with gender equality issues than men specifically within the built environment.



# Introduction

86% of respondents were white, further demonstrating that there remains a diversity issue in our sector. For comparison, just under 82% of the population across England and Wales is white (according to [2021 Census Data\\*](#)), a differential of 4% when compared to our survey responses.

However, the problem is starker when you consider that most responses were from London-based organisations and, as the UK's most diverse region, just over half of Londoners are white.

***I have regularly had to work twice as hard as my male counterparts for half the recognition.***

This likely reflects the relatively low percentage of people from ethnic minority backgrounds working in the built environment but may also indicate that International Women's Day can unconsciously be viewed as a day of acknowledgment 'for white women' within the industry.

Overall, our findings reveal a complex landscape where progress has been made, but significant work remains to achieve true equality. This report sets out the results of the survey and our recommendations for tangible actions to improve gender inclusivity in our sector.

# Key findings



58%

## Imposter Syndrome

A staggering **58% of respondents** reported experiencing imposter syndrome, highlighting the pervasive self-doubt of personal skills, accomplishments, or competence despite evident success that hinders women's career progression, particularly in male-dominated industries like the built environment.

## Work-life balance and gender bias

Work-life balance challenges (**56%**) and gender bias or discrimination (**51%**) remain significant problems for women in the sector. These issues are two significant barriers that many women are continuously trying to navigate based on the data. These challenges are deeply interconnected and can greatly impact career satisfaction and progression.

## Inclusivity and support

While the average inclusivity score of **64%** suggests a moderate level of acceptance, nearly half of the respondents (**47%**) reported feeling inadequately supported in their career progression. The inclusivity score indicates there is significant room for improvement because while many respondents may feel included, there is still a large portion that do not.

Additionally, the perception of inclusivity often reflects how diverse groups feel supported, recognised, and respected in their work environments. Therefore, there is a risk of an unmotivated or disengaged workforce if these issues are not addressed.

# Key findings



## Lack of role models and mentors

Over half of respondents (**56%**) believe there are insufficient role models and mentors for women in leadership positions. This highlights an important gap that has far-reaching consequences for both career progression and organisational culture. A lack of mentors and role models not only stifles individual growth for existing employees but also hinders the development of a more inclusive and diverse leadership for the current and future workforce.

## Allyship and speaking out

Nearly half of the respondents (**46%**) admitted they did not know what allyship was, demonstrating a need for greater awareness and education. The average comfort level for speaking out against gender-based discrimination was **6.4 out of 10**, indicating a lingering hesitation to address these issues openly.



**Allyship** is a concept that has become increasingly important in creating more inclusive and equitable environments, especially for underrepresented groups like women, ethnic minorities, and LGBTQ+ people. The lack of awareness of what allyship is reveals a gap in understanding that can hinder efforts to foster a supportive and inclusive workplace culture.

# What men said

Although over 90% of respondents were women, there was a noticeable and interesting difference in their experiences and those shared by the men who completed the survey. While women often focused on their personal experiences, workplace culture and the emotional impact it has on them, men's responses:

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## Shown less focus on personal challenges

Men were less likely to share personal experiences of discrimination or bias, instead focusing on broader industry observations. Few could point to tangible workplace examples. This suggests an unconscious bias, where the issue is recognised at a general level, but respondents struggled to see it in their own setting.

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## Emphasised structural barriers

Men tended to highlight structural barriers that hinder women's progression, such as a lack of flexible working arrangements or childcare support, rarely focusing on inter-personal challenges.

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## Recognised unconscious bias

Some men acknowledged the existence of unconscious bias and the need for greater awareness and training. These were the same men who were keen to become more involved with allyship – but were not always sure how.



***As the seniority of my position has increased, I have encountered and managed more men who do not like to be managed by a woman.***



# Recommendations

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Data is just data unless we use it to change our real-world behaviours. While the survey results are interesting, what can we do with this information to make the sector more inclusive for women?

At Cratus Group and the LPDF, we are pledging to take the following four actions this year to make our workplace more inclusive. We hope you can join us in these pledges – or create your own based on the needs of women **within your organisation**.

## Tackle 'Imposter Syndrome' head-on.

### Our Pledge.

The high prevalence of Imposter Syndrome calls for targeted initiatives to foster confidence and support women in recognising their abilities.

We pledge to gently call-out imposter syndrome when we see it, encouraging confidence amongst the women we work with by celebrating their successes and empowering them to lead.



### Sector recommendations

Initiatives like mentorship programmes, leadership training, and workshops focused on self-esteem and empowerment targeting women and minorities.

# Recommendations

## Walk the walk on work-life balance.

### Our Pledge.

We know that balance is essential for everyone, not just women in the workplace. Still, with women still so often the primary caregiver for children and older parents, it's doubly important to strike it right if we want to retain and grow female talent. So often though, we talk the talk, but our own behaviours set a different example.

We pledge to set an example from the top-down, talking openly about our life outside of work and encouraging hard work, not long work.



***I have had several advocates throughout my career (predominantly male) who have supported my development and helped raise my profile.***



### Sector recommendations

Organisations should prioritise policies and practices that support work-life balance, such as flexible working arrangements, childcare support, and generous parental leave policies.

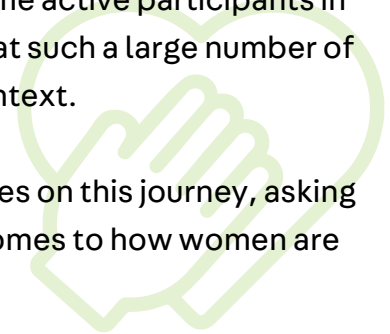
## Build a strong network of allies

for women but also for anyone from an under-represented group that might struggle with discrimination or isolation in the sector.

### Our Pledge.

Educating men about allyship and encouraging them to become active participants in creating a more equitable sector is crucial. It's concerning that such a large number of our survey respondents had never heard of allyship in this context.

We pledge to focus our efforts on bringing our male colleagues on this journey, asking our leadership to challenge themselves and others when it comes to how women are treated and perceived.



***For some men, they only realise issues when a woman in their family faces some form of discrimination.***



### Sector recommendations

Focus some of your D&I efforts (and budget) on men, encouraging them to 'walk a mile' in a woman's shoes. This could include workshops, awareness campaigns, and mentorship programmes that connect men with women in the industry.

# Conclusion

The findings of this survey provide a valuable baseline for understanding the challenges and opportunities for gender equality in the built environment sector. By addressing the issues highlighted in this report, promoting allyship, and empowering women to speak out, we can collectively work towards breaking barriers and advancing gender equality.

Cratus Group and the LPDF are committed to continuing this research annually to track progress and support the creation of a more inclusive and equitable built environment sector.

***“The workplace is a tough environment and very challenging especially in the last few years - in other words, people have their own problems.”***

**We thank you for your continued support, working collectively towards breaking barriers and advancing gender equality.**

