Survey of Surveyors '26 – results summary

The **Survey of Surveyors**, carried out in summer 2026, was circulated to more than 1,000 residential surveyors and promoted on targeted social media, with an estimated response rate of 25 to 30%.

The results are described in a little more detail below, but what the Survey reveals is a thriving industry that relies heavily on small businesses, often consisting of a single individual ambitious to deliver a high-quality service. Overwhelmingly, traditional methodologies and practices prevail, and while it is recognised that new technologies can support surveyors' activities, the majority rely on tried-and-tested systems and communication tools.

Pleasingly (as the survey was supported by Skyline!), Skyline is overwhelmingly the survey-writing software of choice, with more than twice as many users as the second most popular brand. This is almost certainly a reflection of Skyline's focus on independent surveyors who prize report quality above all other factors.

Who responded?

From the nature of the responses, it is clear that the majority of respondents would best be described as independent residential surveyors working for themselves or in small businesses. Only around 10% of respondents work in larger practices, strongly supporting the survey's portrayal of the non-corporate sector of the industry.

Note: A question that often crops up is whether independent surveyors should trade as sole traders or limited companies. The results reveal an almost even split between the two, suggesting that there are equal pros and cons to each.

What work do they do?

The results describe what many of us would classify as traditional general practice surveyors. While the overwhelming majority secure their business primarily from Building Surveys and Home Buyer Surveys, a wide range of additional services provides secondary income streams for many practitioners. These include Buy-to-Let Surveys, New Build Snagging reports, specialist reports on listed and historic buildings, and a range of other report types covering expert witness, retrofit, party wall and valuation services, to name but a few.

Where does the work come from?

The results suggest that an established business with a regular clientele is the most common scenario, with 83% of respondents reporting that most of their work comes directly from consumer enquiries.

Though less common, almost half (49.6%) reported that the bulk of their work is referred by estate and letting agents, with about a third (32.8%) describing conveyancers as their primary source of referrals.

Fewer than a quarter (21.9%) secure the bulk of their instructions from price comparison sites.

Perhaps contrary to what we might all assume, only 13.1% of respondents reported sourcing the bulk of their instructions through social media channels such as Facebook and LinkedIn.

Affiliations

The results suggest that, while RICS membership among both surveyors and valuers is still widely supported, membership of other organisations such as CABE, CIOB and, especially, RPSA is becoming more widely accepted within the industry.

A growing range of affiliations within the energy and retrofit sectors is also becoming more popular.

Age and working life

Perhaps it comes as no surprise that the average age of respondents was around 53. It should be noted that no questions were asked about gender, ethnicity or diversity, although doubtless many of us would recognise that surveying is still a largely male-dominated occupation. Targeted events, however, are increasingly attracting a more diverse audience.

Supporting the "small business" nature of respondents, the overall average suggests that most are doing 2 to 4 surveys a week, recognising that quality, not quantity, is the approach adopted by the majority of practitioners.

Perhaps the most revealing answer in the entire survey is that more than 46% of those who responded do not expect to be working beyond the next 1–10 years. While, superficially, it may seem very worrying that we will lose almost half of our workforce within a decade, this situation has almost certainly prevailed for many years. Yet the industry has survived. However, this has significant implications for any government plans for mandatory pre-marketing surveys. The residential surveyor population is likely to have remained relatively static in recent years, and any attempt to introduce mandatory reports would require significant cost and time investment in training a large cohort of new practitioners.

Working practices

The typical respondent to the survey is someone who employs a traditional approach to their day-to-day activities but will adopt newer technologies when they are seen as able to add significant value to reporting.

While paper site notes remain the most popular on-site data-gathering medium (48.9%), drones (37.2%) and thermal imaging cameras (25.5%) are widely employed. The trusty camera (56.2%) is still the most popular way to take photos, some way ahead of phones (38%).

Market confidence and dealing with AI

Almost 95% of respondents feel confident about their prospects over the next 12 months. The net confidence rating was 62.8%; almost 70% were confident or very confident, indicating a broadly optimistic professional outlook.

When it comes to AI, the picture is a little more mixed.

The general opinion is that AI will make people's jobs easier overall, particularly when it comes to data gathering and management. However, it is equally recognised that greater use of AI will have a variable impact on communications with clients.

While more widespread use of AI is perhaps inevitable, over 50% of respondents either do not want greater AI involvement in day-to-day business operations or are currently uncommitted to it.

The future

In June 2026, the Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government published its roadmap for reform of the home buying and selling process. It included plans for the introduction of a mandatory sales pack that would include a "condition report assessment tailored to the property type and age".

Although no specific details have been provided since the roadmap was published, such a development could have a dramatic and significant impact on the day-to-day activities of independent residential surveyors in England and Wales.

It is, therefore, a little surprising that 53% of survey respondents identified themselves as being aware of the initiative but were not following it in detail; only around a third (34.3%) were following the development of the plans closely.

Perhaps, based on previous experiences, surveyors are somewhat cynical about whether the government's plans will ever come to fruition. However, it does seem that the community is not spending time worrying about proposals that may never see the light of day.

Take-aways

So what are we to deduce from this survey? What do the results mean for the "average" independent residential surveyor in England and Wales?

Perhaps the most important "take-away" is that the majority of practitioners worry less about implementing new technologies and are not focussed, as some suppliers might have us believe, on producing more and more reports at all costs. Low volume and high quality are the ambitions of most surveyors, and building sustainable established businesses is their bread and butter.

It's probably inevitable that a similar survey carried out amongst those from larger firms would be likely to reveal a different set of results. But in many ways that highlights the unique features of the independent and SME Survey community. And it is those features that will ensure the continued success of small-practice surveyors.