

PLANNING FOR RAPID URBANISATION

COMMONWEALTH ASSOCIATION OF PLANNERS

SURVEY OF THE PLANNING PROFESSION IN THE COMMONWEALTH

PRELIMINARY FINDINGS





Twitter: @CAPplanners

E mail: scotland@rtpi.org.uk

Survey prepared by the Commonwealth Association of Planners
Principal contributors: Dyan Currie, Rolf Fenner, Clive Harridge
Design by Allies and Morrison, Architects and Urban Planners, London, UK

Commonwealth Association of Planners
c/o RTPI Scotland
18 Atholl Crescent
Edinburgh EH3 8HQ
Scotland, UK
Tel: +44 (0)131 229 9628
Twitter: @CAPplanners
E mail: scotland@rtpi.org.uk
www.commonwealth-planners.org

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1

THE IMPORTANCE OF PLANNERS AND PLANNING

The planning profession works with elected officials, the community and the development industry to help shape places and spaces. The ability of planning to promote sustainable human settlements for all and to bring stakeholders together from government, industry and civil society to investigate, debate and vision agreed common futures is crucial if we are to effectively address the New Urban Agenda.

Planning helps build more sustainable communities, facilitates economic development and connectivity, and improves the choices available for where and how people live, work and spend their leisure time. Planning facilitates and guides decision making and helps balance private, government and community interests for future net benefit. Planning helps identify hazards and mitigate and reduce risks; it also identifies and protects environmental, social, cultural and heritage values.

Together with fellow built environment professionals, planners have a key role to play in helping to realise the social, economic and environmental opportunities presented by the continuing growth of cities and for helping to ensure that we deliver the aims of the New Urban Agenda for cities to be inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable.

The findings of the survey reveal critical issues in some of the countries of the Commonwealth which are rapidly urbanising and are among the most vulnerable; issues which will be of concern to policy makers and professionals alike.

2

SURVEY OF THE PLANNING PROFESSION

The survey was undertaken by the Commonwealth Association of Planners. (CAP). CAP's membership comprises national planning associations from 28 countries in the Commonwealth. Through its membership CAP represents over 40,000 planners

This survey of the planning profession represents an attempt to assess the current state of the planning profession in the Commonwealth and its capacity to help deliver the targets contained in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the New Urban Agenda. Responses were received from the following countries¹: Australia, Barbados, Belize, Canada, Fiji, Malaysia, Malta, Mauritius, Namibia, New Zealand, Nigeria, South Africa, Trinidad and Tobago, United Kingdom and Zambia. The survey was carried out in parallel with a similar survey of the architectural profession in the Commonwealth.

The following sections are among the survey's principal findings.

Critical lack of capacity in a number of Commonwealth countries, many of which are rapidly urbanising and are among the most vulnerable.

Data from the survey combined with CAPs membership information shows significant variation in the number of planners² per thousand population as illustrated in Figure 1.

Whilst the data will underestimate the actual number of planners in a country since not all planners are members of national associations, the overall trends are clear. The more developed countries have the highest number of planners per population with the highest proportions in UK (1 national association member per 4,421 population), New Zealand (1 national association member per 5,542 population), and Australia (1 national association member per 7,481 population). The lowest proportions are in Bangladesh (1 national association member per 651,806 population), Tanzania (1 national association member per 463,102 population) and Uganda (1 national association member per 441,361 population). Although no definitive benchmarks exist against which to assess the number of planners required, the survey results provide clear evidence of a critical lack of capacity and significant shortfall in many countries of the Commonwealth many of which are urbanising rapidly.

¹ Not all responses were complete and some questions were unanswered.

² Based on the number of qualified planners who are members of a country's national planning association.

This shortage of planners will also impact on the productivity of cities which are the most significant generator of productivity around the world. If the high rates of urbanisation being experienced in many cities were combined with effective planning this could potentially have an increasingly positive impact on productivity in the economic centres of many countries.

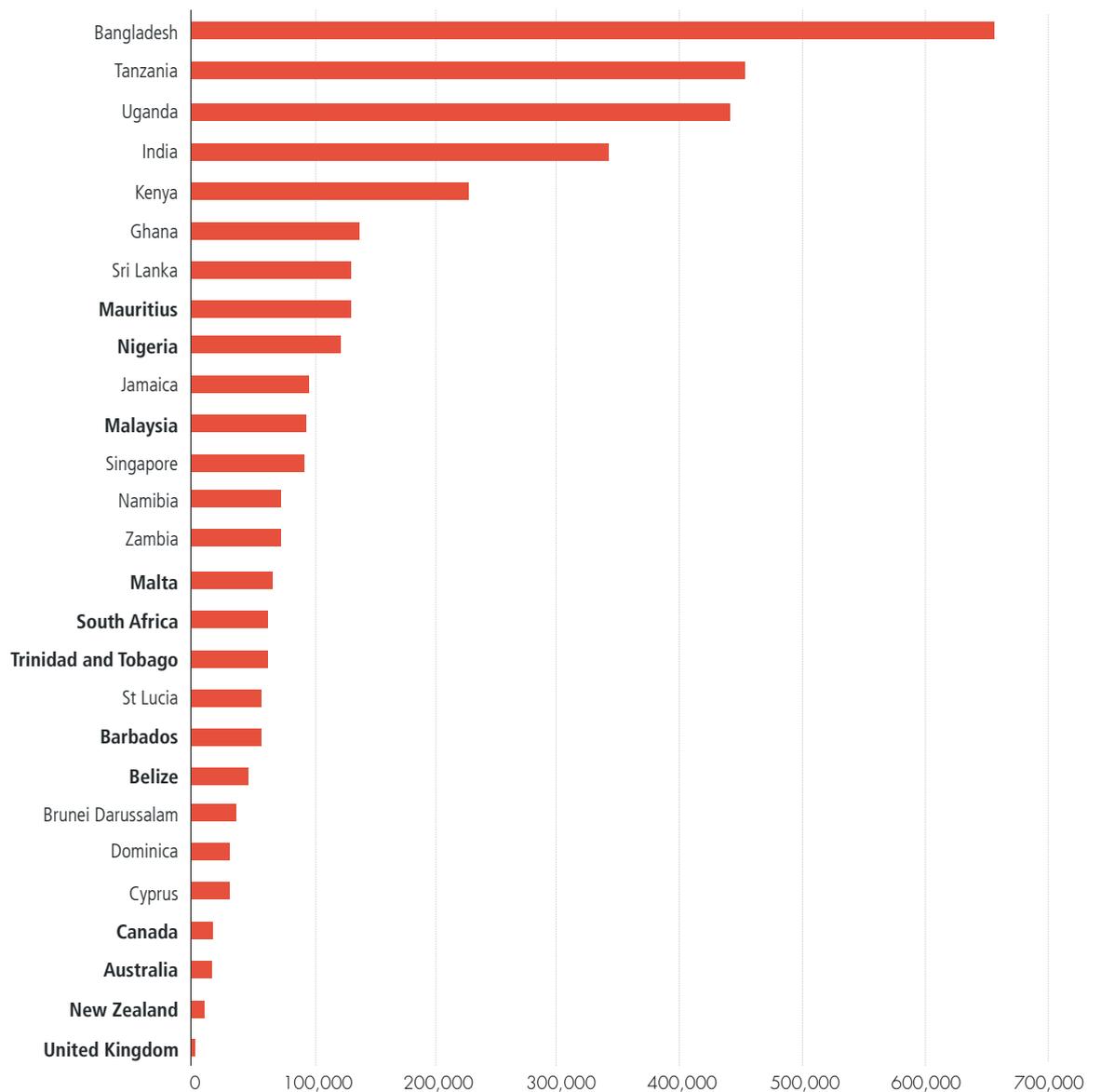


Figure 1
Population per individual member of national planning association

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Lack of educational and institutional capacity to grow the profession fast enough in a number of Commonwealth countries

While the lack of capacity in numbers of planners is a concern in many Commonwealth countries, the ability of the university system to grow to meet future needs is also of concern. Many of the smaller Commonwealth countries have a total lack of local university education opportunities. Where programmes are in place, the relevant institutes are largely responsible for accreditation of the planning programmes and require ongoing Continuing Professional Development.

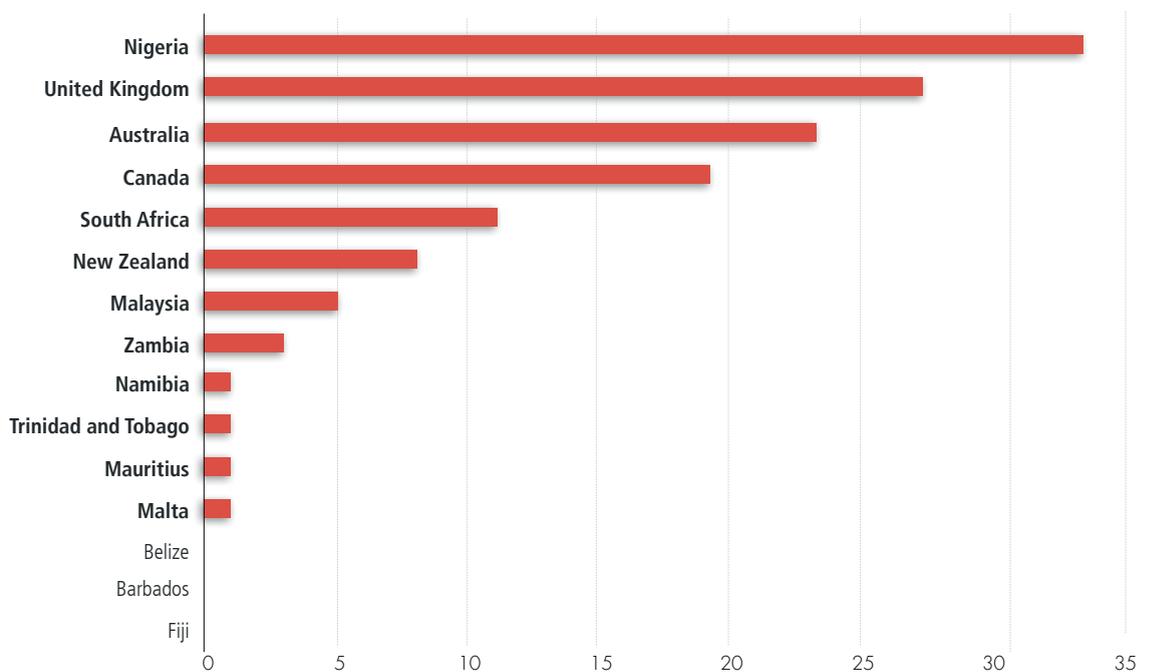


Figure 2
Number of planning schools

Figure 2 shows the number of planning schools in those countries which submitted a questionnaire response.

The number of planning schools is also reflected in the number of planning students who are members of their national planning associations. As illustrated in figure 3 below, there is much variation in the number of planning students with the greatest number in UK, Canada and Australia but with none in a number of small countries including Barbados, Mauritius and Malta. Without a strong cohort of student planners entering the profession the shortage of planners identified in the survey is a challenge which is likely to prevail.

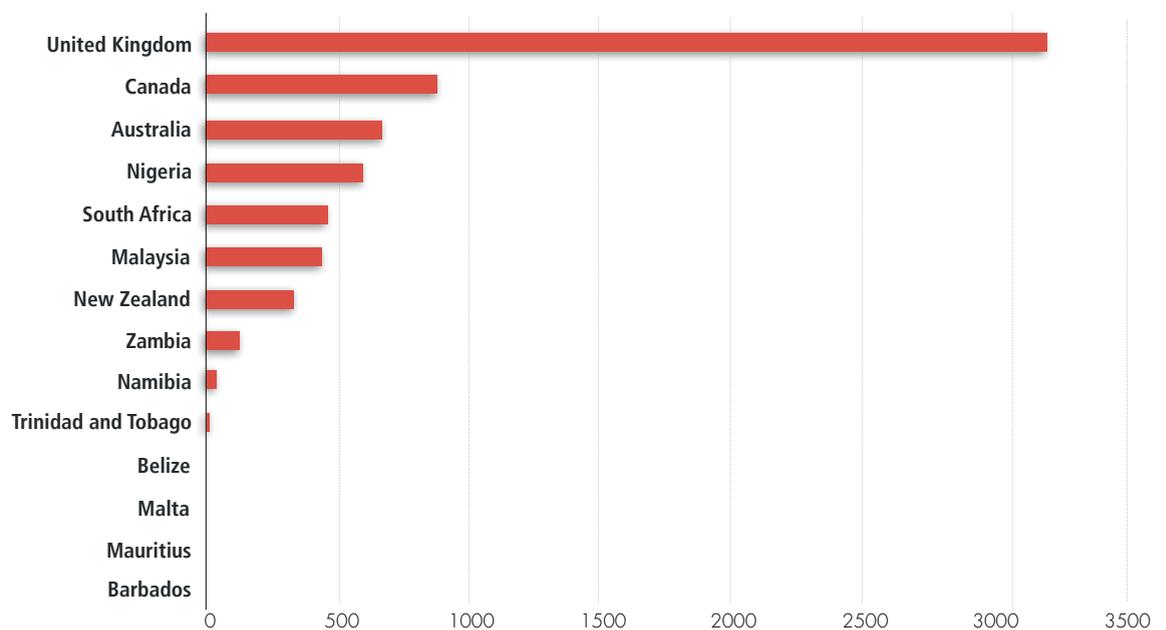


Figure 3
Student members of national planning associations

Role of national planning legislation and policy

National planning legislation was largely considered to be in place in all countries with two exceptions - Australia and Canada . However, a third of respondents did not consider the current legislation to be either wholly or partially fit for purpose with concerns regarding effectiveness raised in Barbados, Belize, Malta, and Trinidad and Tobago. In particular, many of the respondents noted that their legislation had been amended recently or updates were underway and that this was important to the fit for purpose assessment.

64% of respondents believed their country had a National Urban Plan or Policy in place or under preparation (Fiji, Malta, Mauritius, Nigeria, South Africa, Trinidad and Tobago and Zambia,) with similar results for national housing strategies. The pressures for housing and affordable housing provision were noted strongly in the main challenges facing the urban environment. The effective provision of housing for all is important in helping achieve a more inclusive and equitable society.

Mixed responses to the Sustainable Development Goals and the New Urban Agenda

Respondents were asked what the level of understanding and awareness was by planners of the SDGs and whether they believed their countries had developed SDG targets. There was a general good understanding of the SDGs and 86% of respondents were confident their country had developed appropriate targets – two exceptions being Australia and New Zealand. It is to be noted that since the survey was undertaken New Zealand has a

new government which is looking more strongly at sustainable growth and Australia is holding a Senate Inquiry into SDG implementation.

Confidence levels were not as strong with regard to the question of whether governments had embraced the New Urban Agenda and developed an effective implementation plan. Only 35% of respondents replied positively to this question (Barbados, Canada, Fiji, South Africa and Zambia).

Important challenges facing the urban environment and planning profession

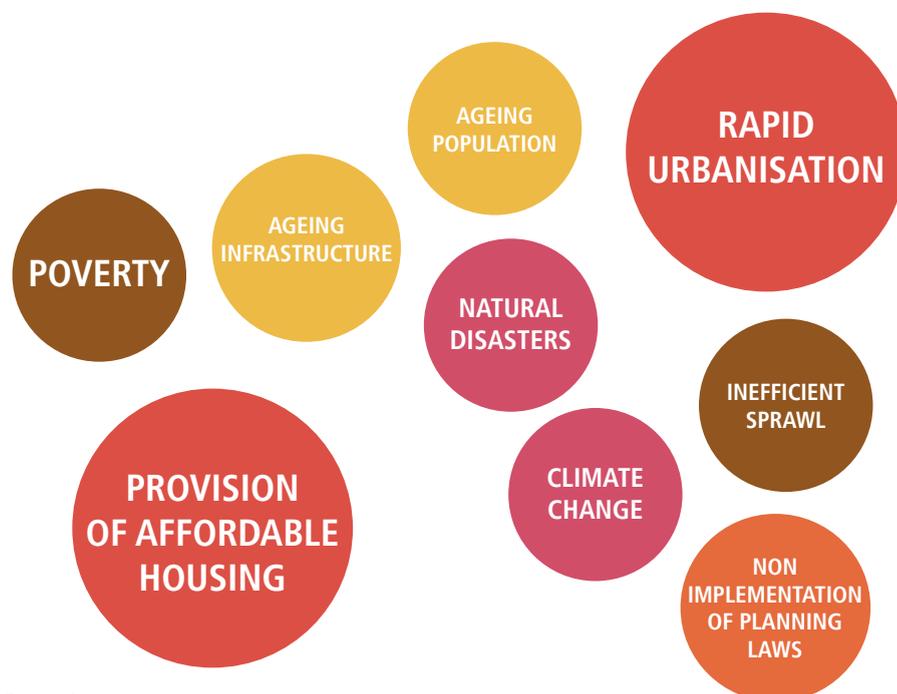


Figure 4

Key challenges facing the urban environment

Respondents were asked to identify the important challenges facing the urban environment and the planning profession today in their countries. A summary of the key responses is shown in figure 4 above.

Rapid urbanisation and provision of affordable housing were raised in 93% of the responses.

In 64% of the responses important challenges facing the planning profession focused on the lack of recognition of the value of planning in achieving inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable communities. Challenges identified in other responses included climate change, education and continuing professional development. Toolkits and best practice examples were also identified as being desired.

Gender imbalance across most respondent countries

The survey responses revealed that there was a significant gender imbalance in the planning profession. Overall the gender split across qualified planners was 62% male and 38% female. There were substantial variations however with the highest proportion of female planners being in Belize 70%, Fiji 54%, Barbados 54% and Zambia 48%. The

lowest proportions of female planners were in Malta 15%, Nigeria 25%, South Africa 30%, Namibia 38% and UK 38%.

There is widespread concern across the Commonwealth that gender issues are not being adequately addressed including in the planning and development of communities. A more equitable split between male and female employment in the planning profession would go some way to addressing these issues.

Governments are the biggest single employer of planners

The survey revealed that the employment split across the respondent countries was as follows:

48%

Government
(national, regional and local)

26%

Private sector

3%

Education

23%

Other

The higher proportion of government employment reflects planning as a public sector activity in all countries. The highest proportions of government employment were found in Malta 97% and Zambia 95%. This higher proportion is in the context of a severe shortage of planning professionals which makes it hugely challenging to effectively deliver government planning policy at all levels of government. However, planners in the private sector also have an important role, particularly in helping to plan and deliver community and economic development. In some countries there was a relatively high proportion employed in the private sector - Namibia 54%, Belize 53%, New Zealand 51% and Australia 46%.

3

NEXT STEPS

This is the first detailed survey of the planning profession in the Commonwealth to have been undertaken. CAP will continue to analyse responses and consider ways to assist the profession to address the findings. The results will also be compared with the parallel survey of the architectural profession. A full report will be published in the coming months.

Tomorrow's cities are being planned and built today and only by addressing these issues now will we be able to realise the potential of urbanisation to create greater levels of inclusivity, prosperity, stability and a truly resilient and sustainable future.

