Workplace Culture

Thinks Insight & Strategy | Executive Summary | November 2024

Background and objectives

To inform the development of an updated Code of Conduct, ARB seeks to dive deeper into workplace culture in the architects' profession.

Building on previous research exploring ethical behaviour and anecdotal evidence of issues relating to workplace culture, we aim to acquire a deeper understanding of the experiences of architects within the profession. The objectives of this research include…

1. How architects feel about their work and how those working in the sector describe the culture

2. Whether cultural issues related to misconduct and mistreatment exist, including their prevalence and demographics most impacted

3. The nature of any cultural issues, including workplace culture and architect conduct

4. How, if at all, the profession responds to these issues

5. Where these issues begin on the architectural career path

6. The impact these issues may have on the public perception of architects

7. Understand the quality of architectural services

8. Perceptions of what 'good' could look like

9. Potential solutions to challenges in the profession

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Participants were sorted into three key groups

Future Professionals

89 participants

- Those with Part 1 / Part 2 qualifications with experience working in industry
- Architectural apprentices

Early Career Professionals

293 participants

- Candidates currently taking their final (Part 3) qualification
- Registered architects with less than 5 years of experience post-registration

Experienced Professionals

516 participants

- Registered architects with five or more years of experience post-registration

A full sample breakdown is available in the appendix of the full report.

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Key findings

Key findings

1. Those working in the architects' profession value and take pride in the work that they do – but many feel that it falls short of its potential. They are left feeling undervalued on a personal and financial level.

2. Future and Early Career Professionals in particular find the workplace culture within the profession more negative than expected, and despite it being a top priority, work-life balance is rarely a possibility.

3. Excessive workload and hierarchies that create significant power imbalances within the profession are a problem on multiple levels – personally, professionally (in terms of the quality of work produced), and because it can lead to unethical behaviour and even misconduct.

4. Experiences of harassment & bullying (41%), discrimination (33%) and sexual misconduct (10%) are high, compared to all UK workplaces, and higher still for females, ethnic minorities and those with disabilities.

5. Worryingly, a significant proportion of professionals (33%) don't feel confident raising concerns as they fear they won't be taken seriously, and that it will affect their career progression.

6. Some firms are trying to create more positive working cultures, but in doing so, they are confronted with a chain of barriers – namely excessive workloads, hierarchies that create significant power imbalances, a lack of management expertise, limited representation and cyclical poor treatment.

7. There is a feeling that more could be done to empower these efforts – and from many, a desire to see ARB directly involved with these efforts too.

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Considerations for the industry going forwards

1. Excessive workloads and hierarchies that create power imbalances not only have a negative personal effect, but risk **detriment to the quality and due diligence of work**. They can also **create barriers** to **raising concerns about work quality and ethics**. This makes **workplace culture an issue for ARB.**

2. In addition, professionals overwhelmingly **do not feel confident to raise concerns about misconduct**. There is **scope for ARB** to ensure they have the **right information and reassurance** to do so, and some professionals called for greater enforcement (e.g. regulating at a firm level).

3. There are **firms taking positive, practical steps to overcome the barriers** to tackle these issues, and **lessons can be taken from their best practice** (e.g. discouraging a culture of unsustainable long hours, prioritising training and ensuring greater representation in management positions).

4. In order to empower these efforts, action in two key areas could be explored by ARB:
1) shaping good conduct and practice, including ethical behaviours, and 2) creating clarity about misconduct enforcement.

5. A wider industry debate on **how to tackle the 'long hours for low pay' culture.**

Workplace culture

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Professionals believe an *ideal* workplace embodies creativity, collaboration, and respect

Some workplaces already embody these qualities:

"My professional workplace has given me opportunities to study part-time alongside university to develop my professional career… architects from all levels work collaboratively."

\- Future Professional

"My workplace is very welcoming and friendly, and understanding of prior commitments – work comes second to life."

\- Early Career Professional

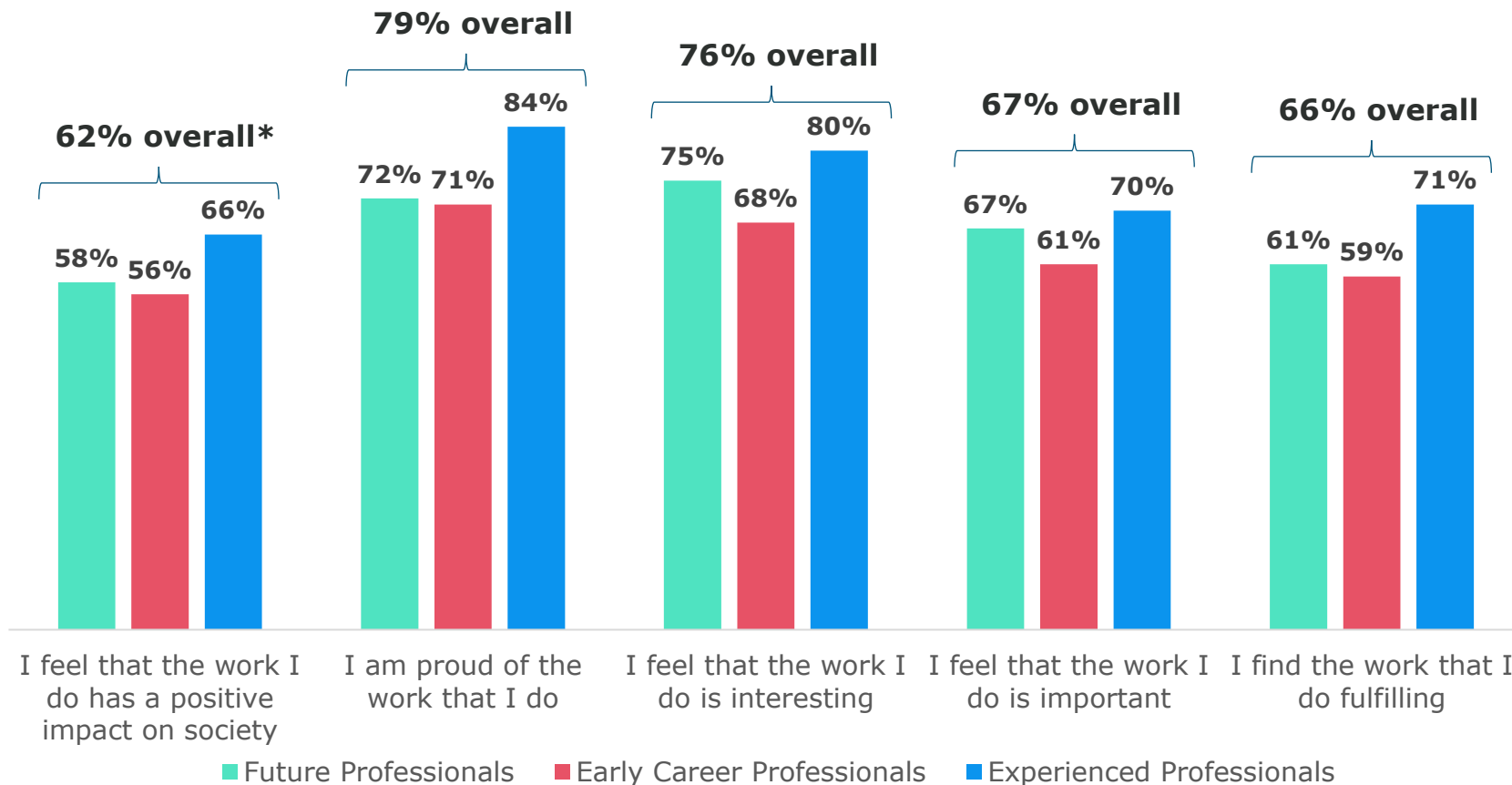*"Playing a role in creating places is a privilege. For me, it brings a joy and interest that doesn't just stop at 5pm."*

\- Experienced Professional

Q1. What 3 words would you use to describe the ideal culture of the architects' profession? Base: All respondents (n=898); Future Professionals (n=89), Early Career Professionals (n=293), Experienced Professionals (n=516).

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They generally feel their work is interesting, and take pride in what they do

Participants' attitudes toward their work
(NET % agreeing)

62% overall*
- 58% Future Professionals
- 56% Early Career Professionals
- 66% Experienced Professionals

I feel that the work I do has a positive impact on society

79% overall
- 72% Future Professionals
- 71% Early Career Professionals
- 84% Experienced Professionals

I am proud of the work that I do

76% overall
- 75% Future Professionals
- 68% Early Career Professionals
- 80% Experienced Professionals

I feel that the work I do is interesting

67% overall
- 67% Future Professionals
- 61% Early Career Professionals
- 70% Experienced Professionals

I feel that the work I do is important

66% overall
- 61% Future Professionals
- 59% Early Career Professionals
- 71% Experienced Professionals

I find the work that I do fulfilling

Legend: ■ Future Professionals ■ Early Career Professionals ■ Experienced Professionals

"[It's] this love you have for the profession. That's all I can describe it. You're madly in love with architecture. Aged 13, I said I wanted to be an architect and I just felt I had to be one."
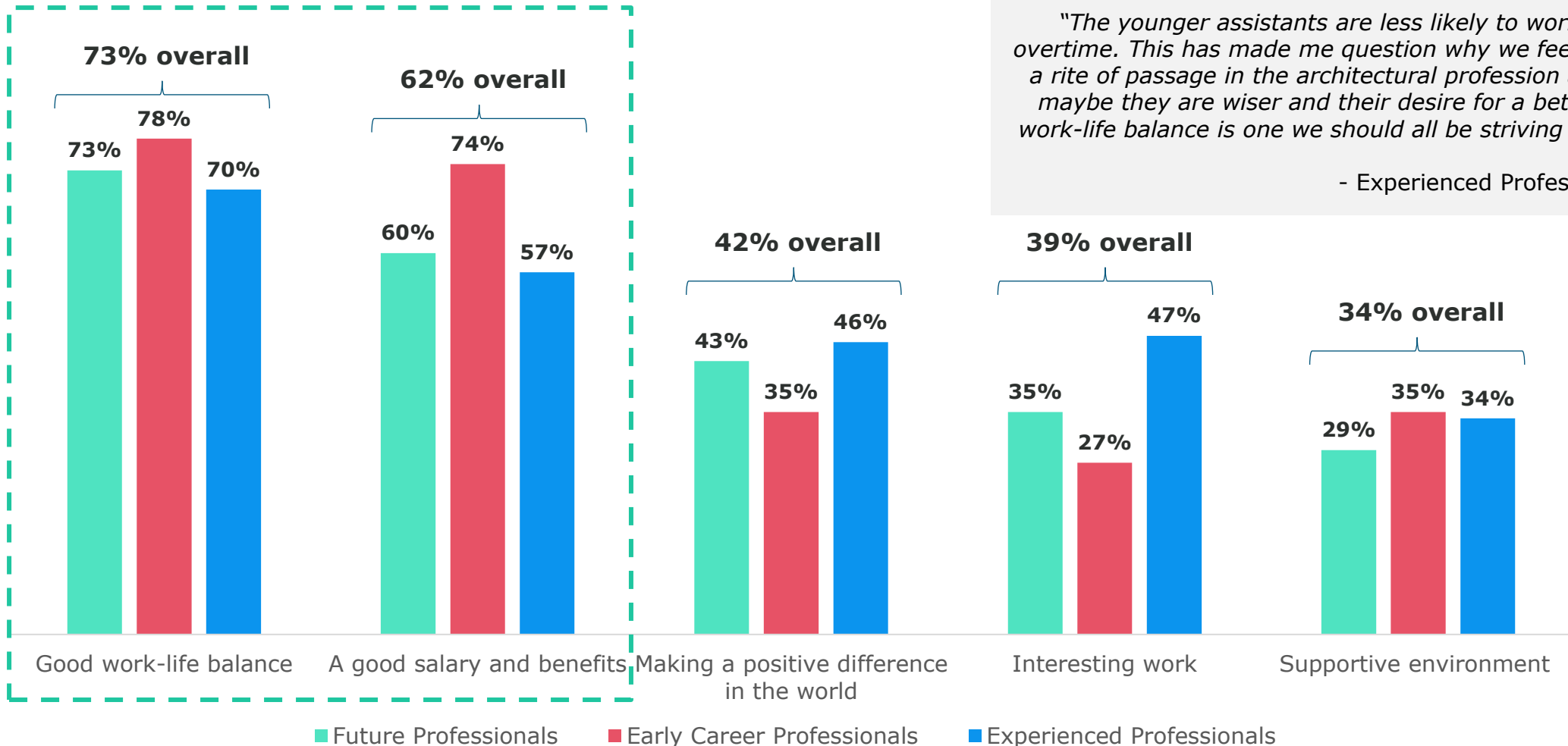
- Experienced Professional

"[I like] the problem-solving element of it and you're dealing with a lot of different moving pieces...The thing that kind of helps me get out of bed is doing this for the hopefully greater good."

- Future Professional

Female and ethnic minority participants were less likely to agree with these statements than their White and male counterparts; **73%** of ethnic minorities were proud of their work compared to **83%** of white participants.**

Q5. Thinking about your own experiences working in the architects' profession, to what extent do you agree with the following statements? Base: All respondents (n=898); Future Professionals (n=89), Early Career Professionals (n=293), Experienced Professionals (n=516). *Overall percentages show the total across the whole sample.* **Differences statistically significant, with a p-value of 0.05 or below.*

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Work-life balance, along with a good salary and benefits, emerge as key workplace priorities

73% overall

- 73% — Good work-life balance (Future Professionals)
- 78% (Early Career Professionals)
- 70% (Experienced Professionals)

62% overall

- 60% — A good salary and benefits (Future Professionals)
- 74% (Early Career Professionals)
- 57% (Experienced Professionals)

42% overall

- 43% — Making a positive difference in the world (Future Professionals)
- 35% (Early Career Professionals)
- 46% (Experienced Professionals)

39% overall

- 35% — Interesting work (Future Professionals)
- 27% (Early Career Professionals)
- 47% (Experienced Professionals)

34% overall

- 29% — Supportive environment (Future Professionals)
- 35% (Early Career Professionals)
- 34% (Experienced Professionals)

"The younger assistants are less likely to work overtime. This has made me question why we feel it is a rite of passage in the architectural profession and maybe they are wiser and their desire for a better work-life balance is one we should all be striving for."

\- Experienced Professional

Legend: ■ Future Professionals ■ Early Career Professionals ■ Experienced Professionals

Q4. Which of the following do you prioritise in the workplace? Base: All respondents (n=898); Future Professionals (n=89), Early Career Professionals (n=293), Experienced Professionals (n=516).

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Architects embody many of the values and attributes expected by the public, but not all of them...
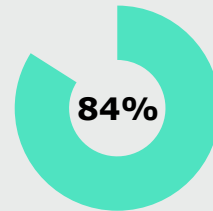
Of the public*:
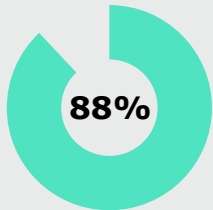
88% think architects should show **integrity and honesty**, including with contracts, disputes and client money.
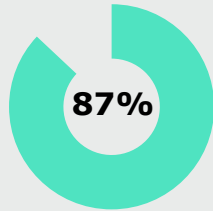
87% think it is important for architects to **take accountability** for decisions made when it comes to safety, and 81% when it comes to environmental sustainability.

84% think architects should show **empathy** and **consideration** to everyone they work with.
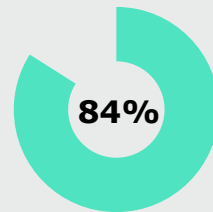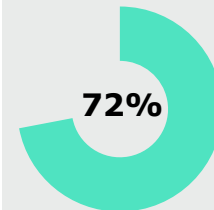
84% think the architectural industry should be an environment where **staff feel safe**, without the worry of **mistreatment** or **inappropriate behaviour** from colleagues.
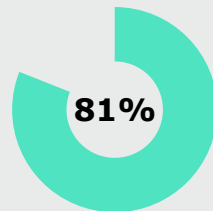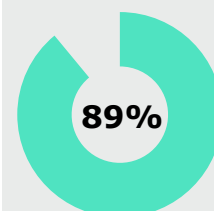
81% think the architectural industry should be an environment where staff can **challenge those who behave inappropriately.**
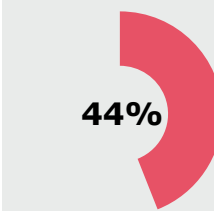
Of architects and professionals in the sector**:

72% agree the architects' profession embodies **integrity** and **68%** agree it embodies **honesty.**

89% agree the architects' profession embodies **commitment to clients** and **71%** agree it embodies **accountability.**
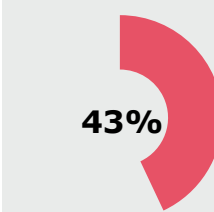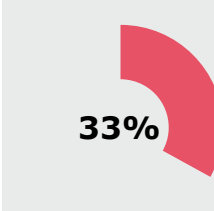
44% agree the architects' profession embodies **empathy** and **53%** agree it embodies **respect.**
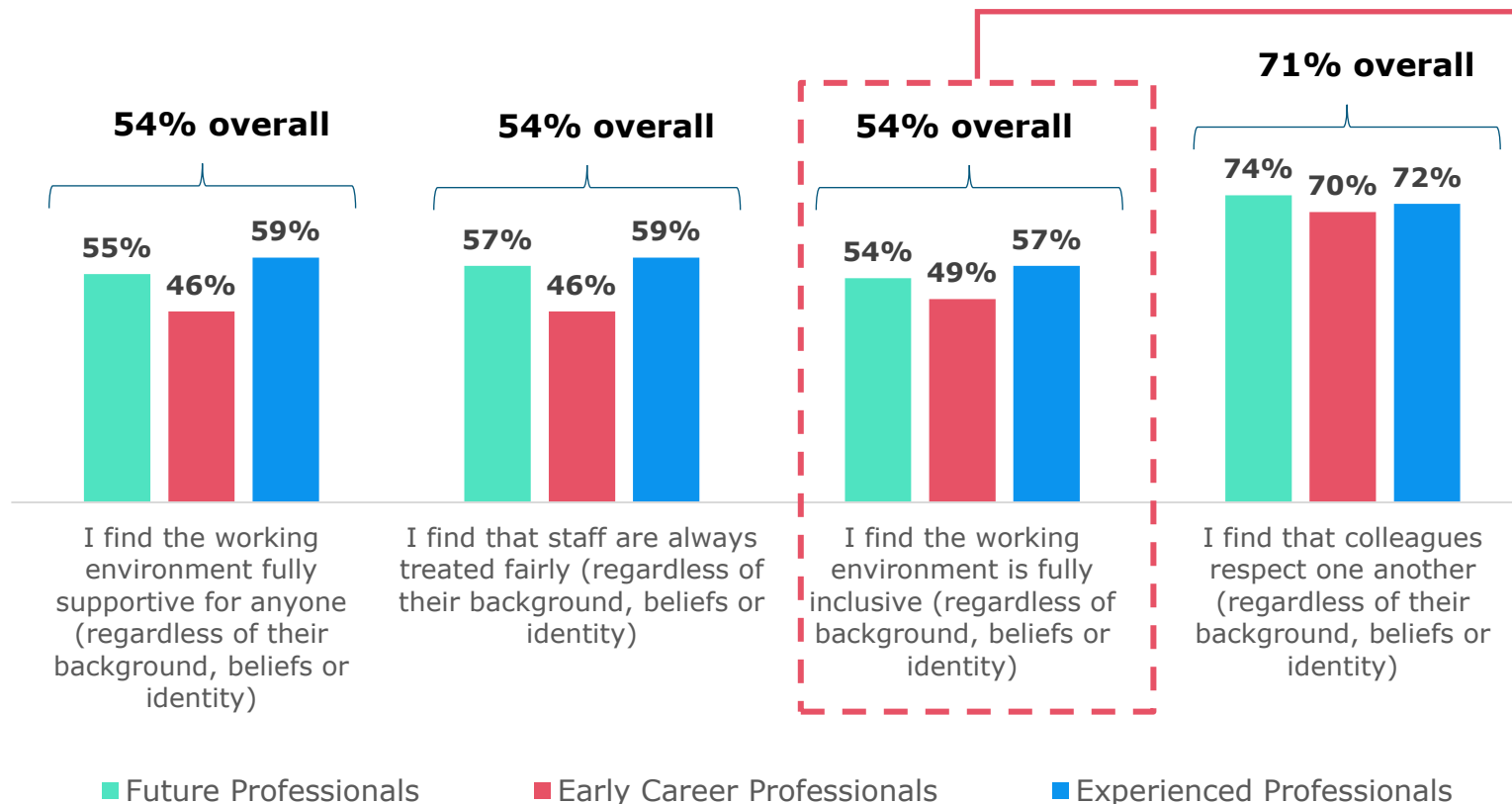
43% agree the architects' profession embodies **inclusion.**

33% would feel **confident raising a concern** if they experienced or observed workplace misconduct.

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Only half of professionals agree that the working environment is inclusive – and this drops further among groups underrepresented in the profession

Inclusiveness in the architects' profession
(NET % agreeing)

54% overall
- 55% Future Professionals
- 46% Early Career Professionals
- 59% Experienced Professionals

I find the working environment fully supportive for anyone (regardless of their background, beliefs or identity)

54% overall
- 57% Future Professionals
- 46% Early Career Professionals
- 59% Experienced Professionals

I find that staff are always treated fairly (regardless of their background, beliefs or identity)

54% overall
- 54% Future Professionals
- 49% Early Career Professionals
- 57% Experienced Professionals

I find the working environment is fully inclusive (regardless of background, beliefs or identity)

71% overall
- 74% Future Professionals
- 70% Early Career Professionals
- 72% Experienced Professionals

I find that colleagues respect one another (regardless of their background, beliefs or identity)

- ■ Future Professionals
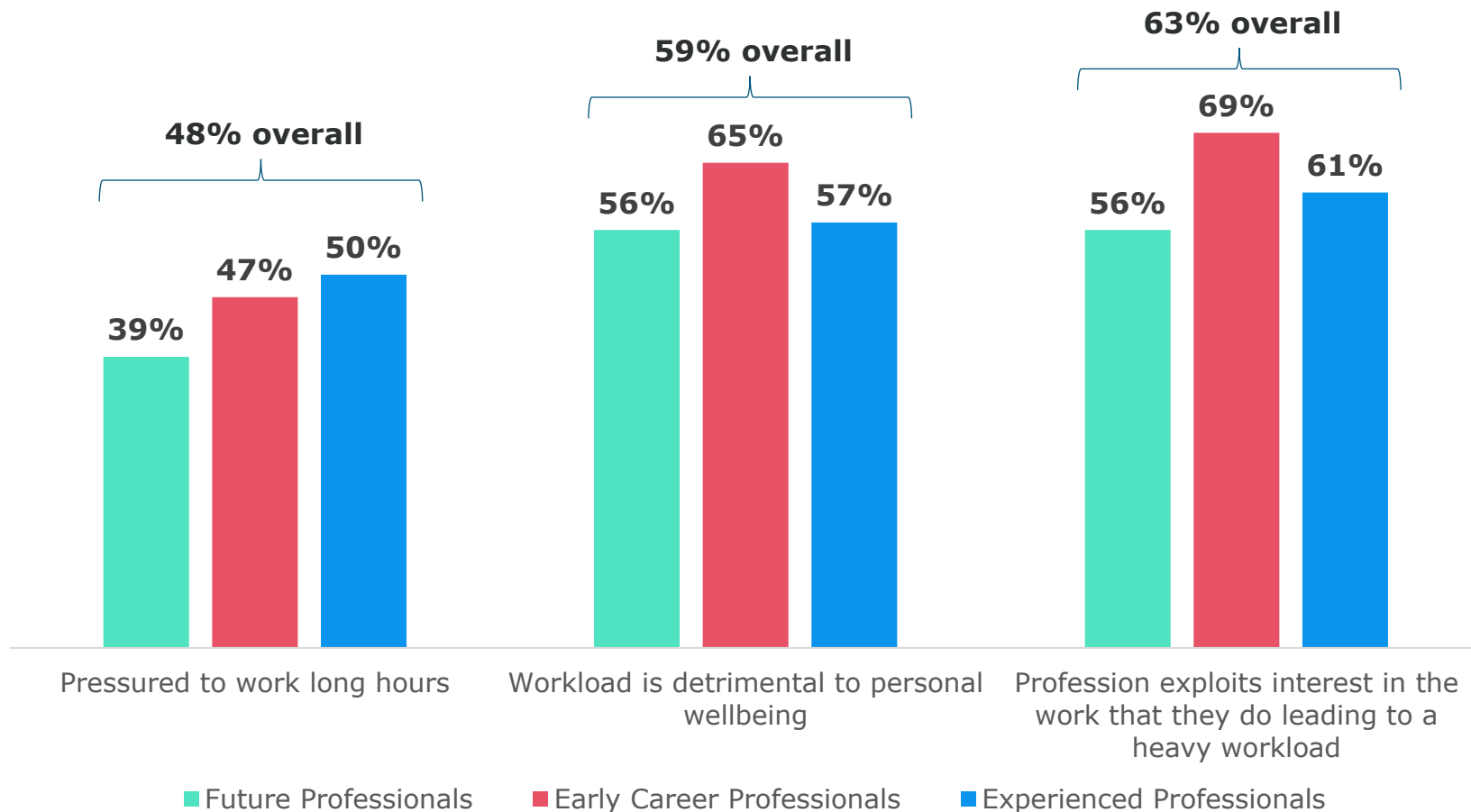- ■ Early Career Professionals
- ■ Experienced Professionals

Professionals who have a disability, who are female, or are from an ethnic minority background are more likely to disagree with statements about the profession's inclusivity*.

- 40% of professionals with disabilities disagree that the working environment is fully inclusive, compared to 28% for those with no disability

- 35% of professionals from ethnic minority backgrounds disagree that the profession is fully inclusive, compared to 23% of white British professionals

- 39% of women disagree that the profession is fully inclusive, compared to 22% of men

Q13. Thinking about your own experiences working in the architects' profession, to what extent do you agree with the following statements? Base: All respondents (n=898); Future Professionals (n=89), Early Career Professionals (n=293), Experienced Professionals (n=516). *Differences statistically significant, with a p-value of 0.05 or below.

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Coupled with this, they currently feel they are underpaid, overworked and undervalued

"When you're exhausted and not fairly compensated for your work, exploitation is easy and cutting corners is more likely."

- Future Professional

"I believe that the profession being significantly underpaid leads to a culture where additional training and learning is not prioritised in the workplace."

- Early Career Professional

"There is an expectation of working long hours, and the financial reward is virtually non-existent."

- Experienced Professional

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Many feel pressured to work long hours, and find their workload has a detrimental effect on their wellbeing

Architects' attitudes towards long hours and workload
(NET % agreeing)

48% overall

- 39%
- 47%
- 50%

Pressured to work long hours

59% overall

- 56%
- 65%
- 57%

Workload is detrimental to personal wellbeing

63% overall

- 56%
- 69%
- 61%

Profession exploits interest in the work that they do leading to a heavy workload

■ Future Professionals ■ Early Career Professionals ■ Experienced Professionals

"The expectation of working long hours is almost considered a 'standard' especially when deadlines approach, and there is not reward or any TOIL nor overtime payment."
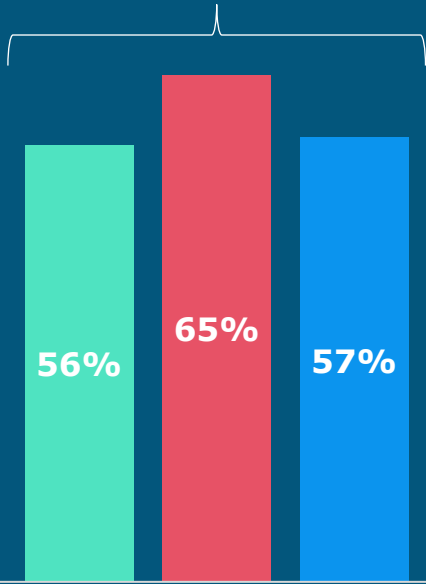
\- Early Career Professional

"The atmosphere is reinforced by, like, disapproving glances…it's created an environment where staying late is literally mandatory. The risk of termination for leaving is very real."

\- Future Professional

Early Career Professionals were **most likely to feel their workload was detrimental to their wellbeing** – 9% more than Future Professionals, and 8% more than Experienced Professionals.

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The impact on wellbeing is felt most strongly by female professionals, ethnic minorities, and those employed in large firms

59% overall

56% **65%** **57%**

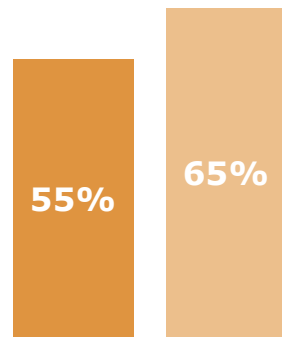### Workload is detrimental to personal wellbeing
(% agreeing with statement)

- Future Professionals
- Early Career Professionals
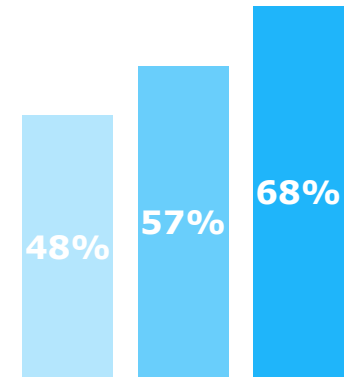- Experienced Professionals

By gender

55% **65%**

- Male
- Female

By ethnicity

53% **66%**
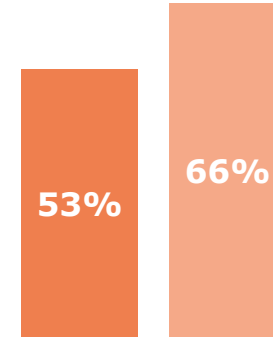
- White British
- Ethnic Minority

By firm size

48% **57%** **68%**

- 0 to 9
- 10 to 49
- 50+

"Especially for people who are from foreign countries…I've heard stories where they have told me that they were threatened with dismissal if they didn't work additional hours."

- Future Professional

"I couldn't carry on with the university schedule and deadlines and things – it was a lot of work. It's been quite a lesson for me in terms of trying not to do too much all at once."

- Experienced Professional

Q8. Thinking about your own experiences working in the architects' profession, to what extent do you agree with the following questions. Base: All respondents (n=898); Future Professionals (n=89), Early Career Professionals (n=293), Experienced Professionals (n=516). *Differences between male/female, white British / ethnic minority, and 50% / 0-9 and 10-49 statistically significant, with a p-value of 0.05 or below.

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This excessive workload has an impact on standards within the profession, and ethical conduct too

73% believe having a good **work-life balance** is a top priority, **but..**
- **Only 42%** agree that their working environment enables this
- **Only 38%** believe that they are given an acceptable workload.

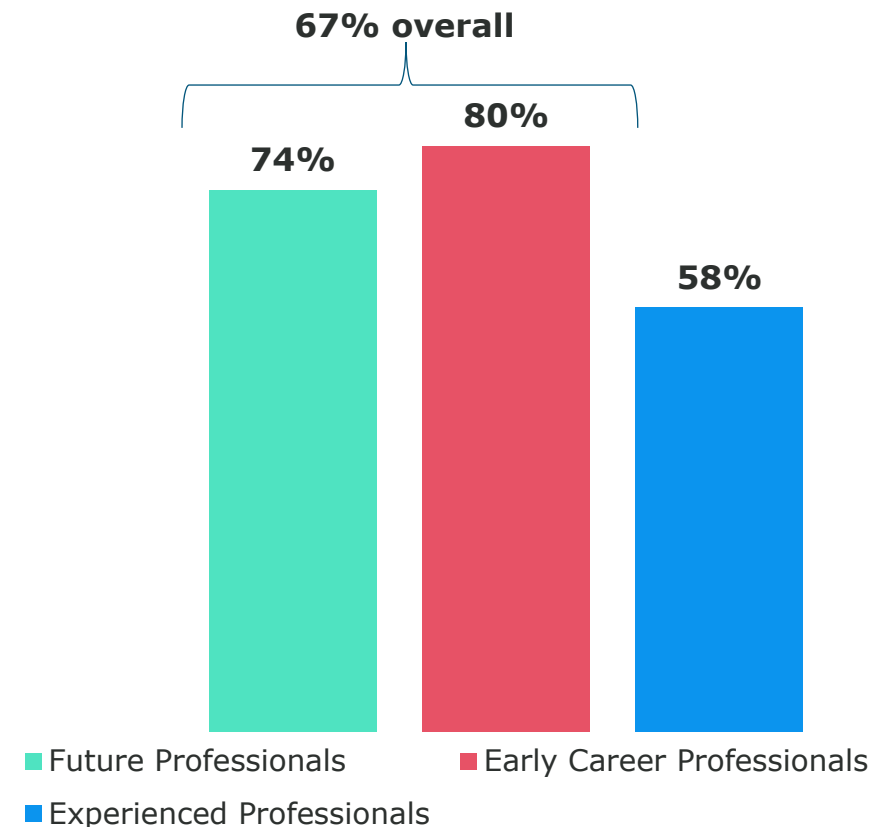**Excessive workload** also has a wider effect on **standards** within the profession
- **Only 35%** feel they are given enough time to get work done to an appropriate standard
- **56%** feel workload is detrimental to the quality of work produced.

This impacts **ethical conduct** too, with **female professionals**, **ethnic minorities**, and those in **large firms** feeling this most keenly:
- 60% male vs 79% female
- 63% White British vs 73% ethnic minorities
- 76% companies of 50+, 65% 10-49, 56% 1-9.*

"It starts to burn people out. They just become tired… they're not actually working as effectively as they think they are. And they're not necessarily producing anything more – just taking longer to do it."

- Experienced Professional

"It's a very obvious fact that it impacts people's health…losing sleep obviously impairs your cognitive function…or just the overall stress of it all. And so definitely there's a correlation between that and the quality of work."

- Early Career Professional

Professionals' belief that their workload is detrimental to ethical conduct
(NET % agreeing)

67% overall

74% — Future Professionals
80% — Early Career Professionals
58% — Experienced Professionals

■ Future Professionals ■ Early Career Professionals
■ Experienced Professionals

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While most feel comfortable raising concerns, hierarchies that create power imbalances can still be detrimental to ethics and quality of work
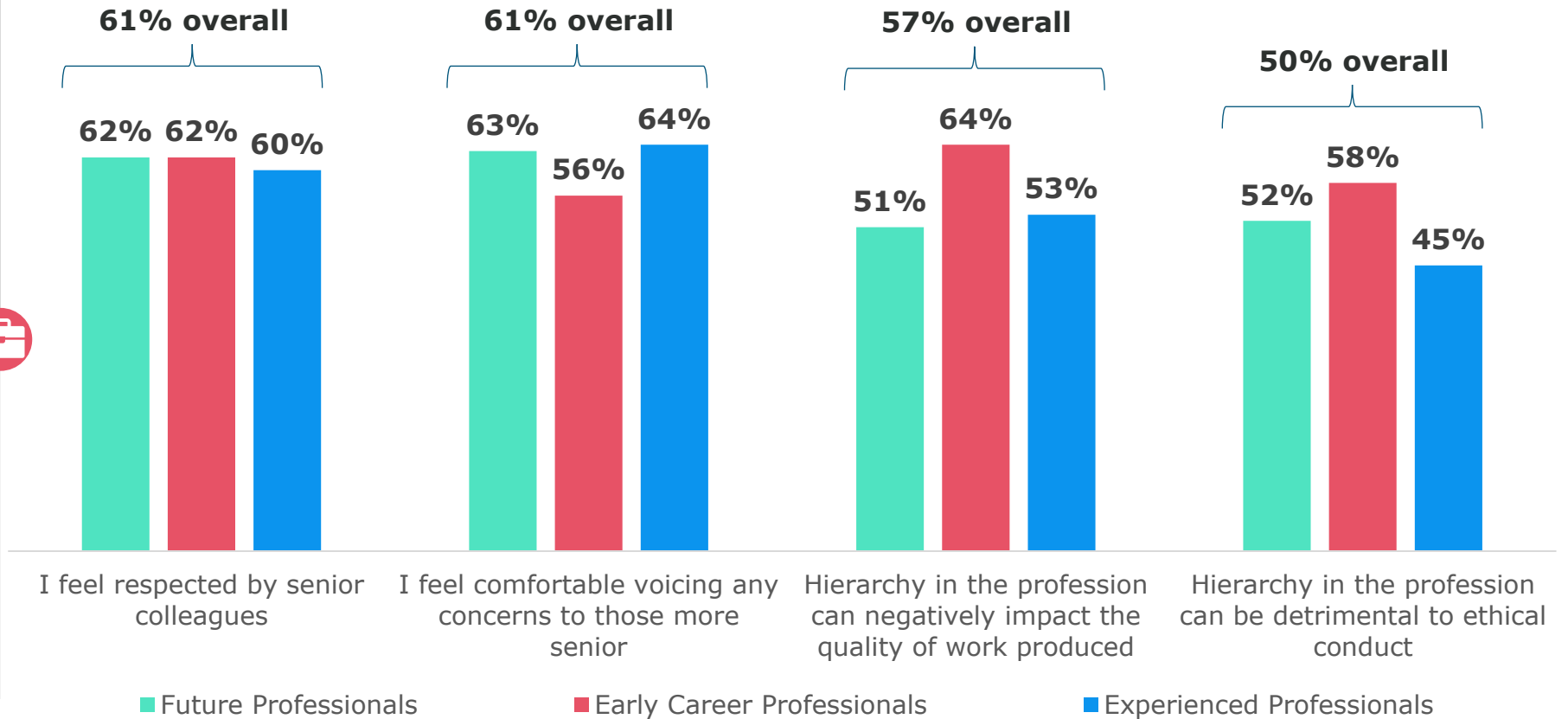
Over half of professionals still perceive that **hierarchies sometimes operate in ways that create power imbalances**, and such imbalances are detrimental to standards and ethical conduct. This may indicate that **positive relationships with senior colleagues are situational and firm-specific,** and there remains an awareness of hierarchy as an issue in the profession.

"[My boss] started designing something I knew wasn't technically possible to do, and it had a big impact on the rest of the scheme…and I said 'well, stop, we need to change this,' and redesigned it. And then I was told 'no, do it the way we've drawn it.'"

- Early Career Professional

Professionals' attitudes toward hierarchy, quality of work, and ethical conduct
(NET % agreeing)

61% overall

I feel respected by senior colleagues
- 62% Future Professionals
- 62% Early Career Professionals
- 60% Experienced Professionals

61% overall

I feel comfortable voicing any concerns to those more senior
- 63% Future Professionals
- 56% Early Career Professionals
- 64% Experienced Professionals

57% overall

Hierarchy in the profession can negatively impact the quality of work produced
- 51% Future Professionals
- 64% Early Career Professionals
- 53% Experienced Professionals

50% overall

Hierarchy in the profession can be detrimental to ethical conduct
- 52% Future Professionals
- 58% Early Career Professionals
- 45% Experienced Professionals

■ Future Professionals   ■ Early Career Professionals   ■ Experienced Professionals

Q7. Thinking about your own experiences working in the architects' profession, to what extent to you agree with the following questions? Base: All respondents (n=898); Future Professionals (n=89), Early Career Professionals (n=293), Experienced Professionals (n=516)

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Workplace misconduct

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A significant proportion of the profession say that they have experienced workplace misconduct

41% overall

33% overall

10% overall

Bullying and harassment: 29%, 40%, 43%
Discrimination: 26%, 37%, 32%
Sexual misconduct: 6%, 11%, 10%

■ Future Professionals ■ Early Career Professionals ■ Experienced Professionals
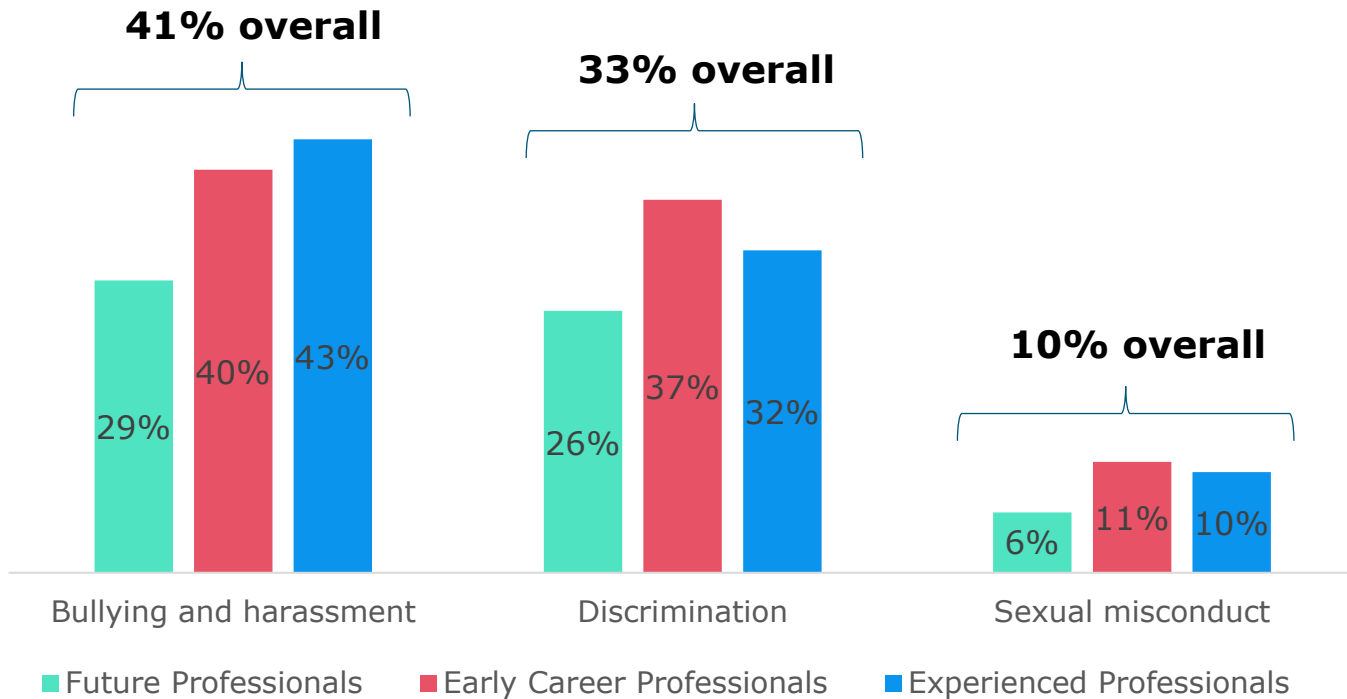
Benchmarking data from other sectors:

Civil Service (2023[a])
- Bullying and harassment: 8%
- Discrimination: 7%
- Sexual harassment: 5%

All workplaces (2023[b])
- Discrimination: 22%

Financial services (2023[c])
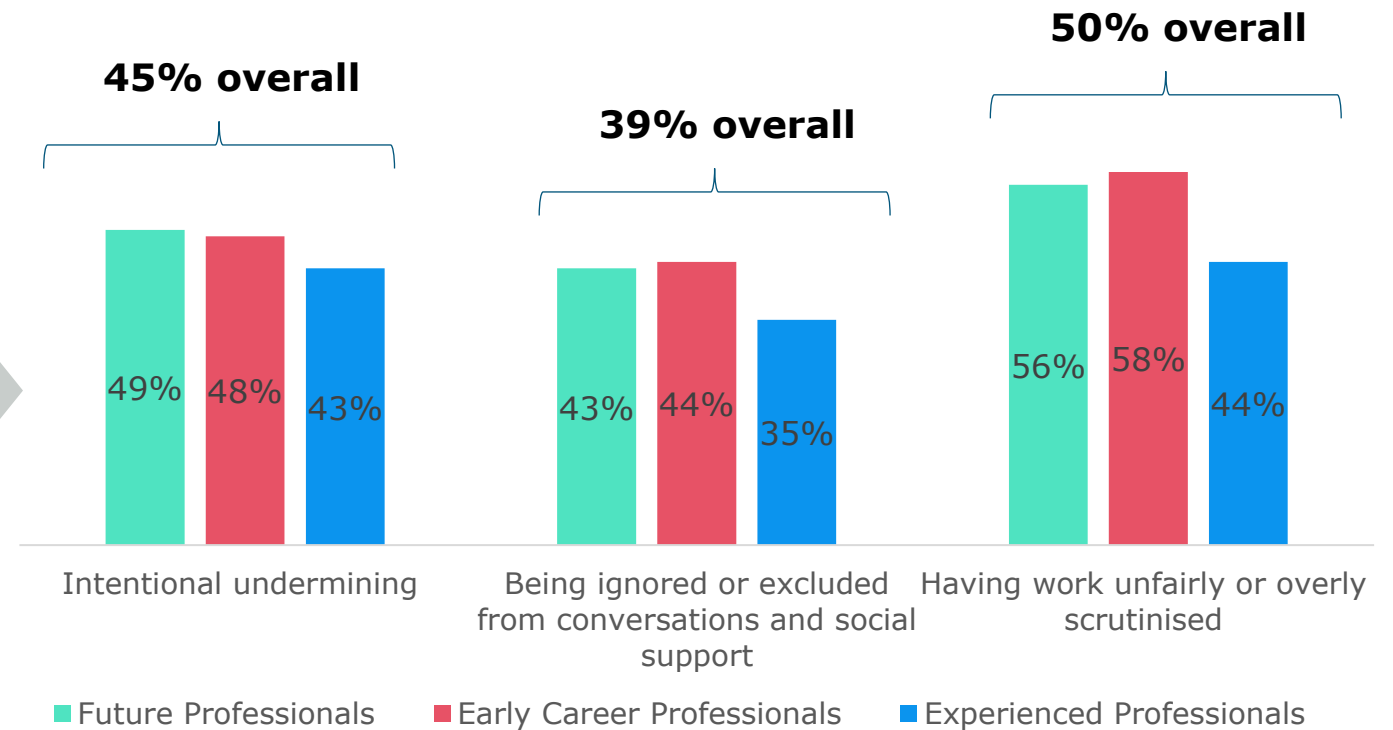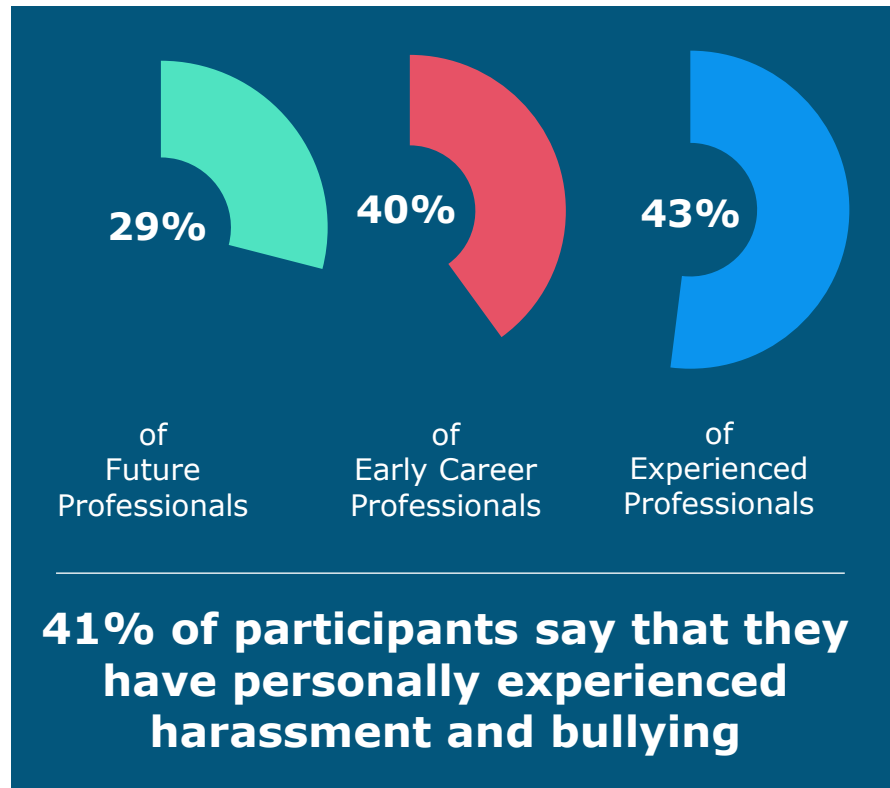- Sexual harassment: 45%

Particular groups are more likely to recount experiences of these forms of misconduct. Likelihood increases for groups underrepresented in the profession*:

- Professionals with disabilities
- Female professionals
- Professionals from ethnic minority backgrounds

Additionally, the likelihood of experiencing misconduct also correlates with firm size and location*:

- Professionals from larger (50+) practices
- Professionals working in London and the South East

Q15. Thinking about workplace misconduct, how often (if ever) have you personally experienced the following? Base: All respondents (n=898); Future Professionals (n=89), Early Career Professionals (n=293), Experienced Professionals (n=516).
a: Civil Service People Survey, 2023. b: Public polling, People Management, 2023. c: Evidence provided to Parliament submitted by *Can't Buy My Silence*, 2023. Note that these benchmarks may use different questions or definitions. *Differences statistically significant, with a p-value of 0.05 or below.

Almost half of Early Career and Experienced Professionals have experienced harassment & bullying

29%
of Future Professionals

40%
of Early Career Professionals

43%
of Experienced Professionals

41% of participants say that they have personally experienced harassment and bullying

45% overall

Intentional undermining
- 49% Future Professionals
- 48% Early Career Professionals
- 43% Experienced Professionals

39% overall

Being ignored or excluded from conversations and social support
- 43% Future Professionals
- 44% Early Career Professionals
- 35% Experienced Professionals

50% overall

Having work unfairly or overly scrutinised
- 56% Future Professionals
- 58% Early Career Professionals
- 44% Experienced Professionals

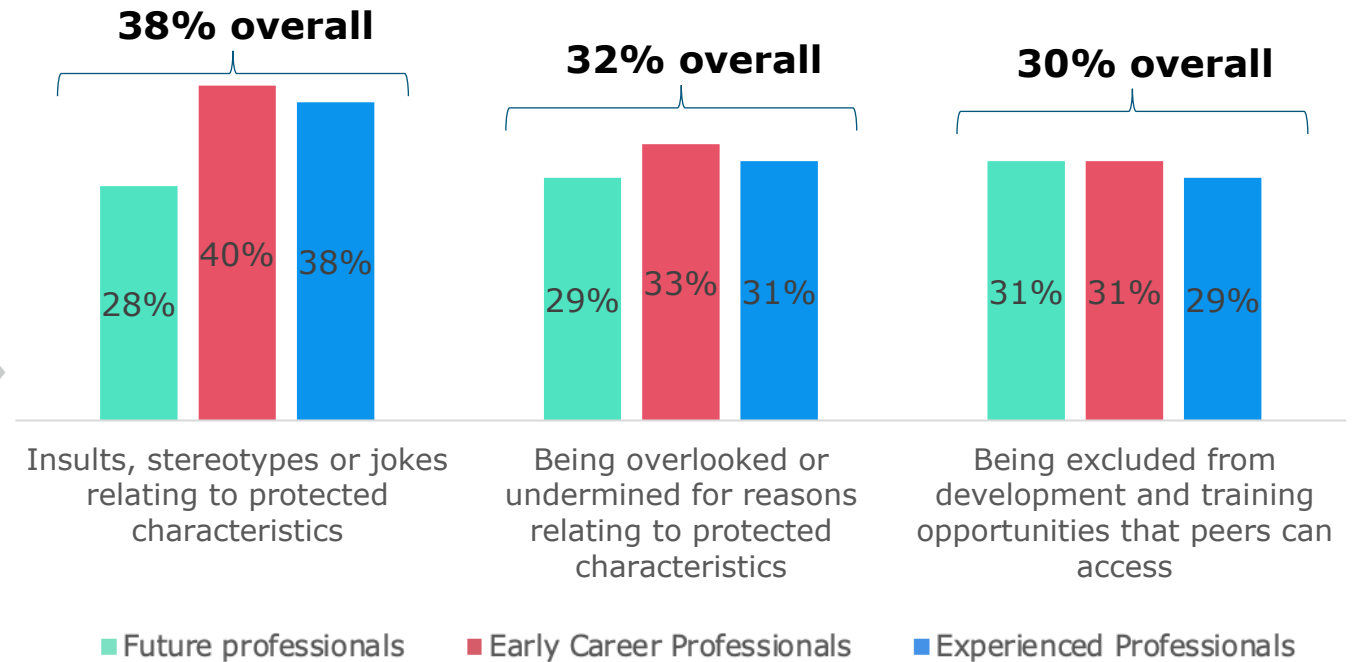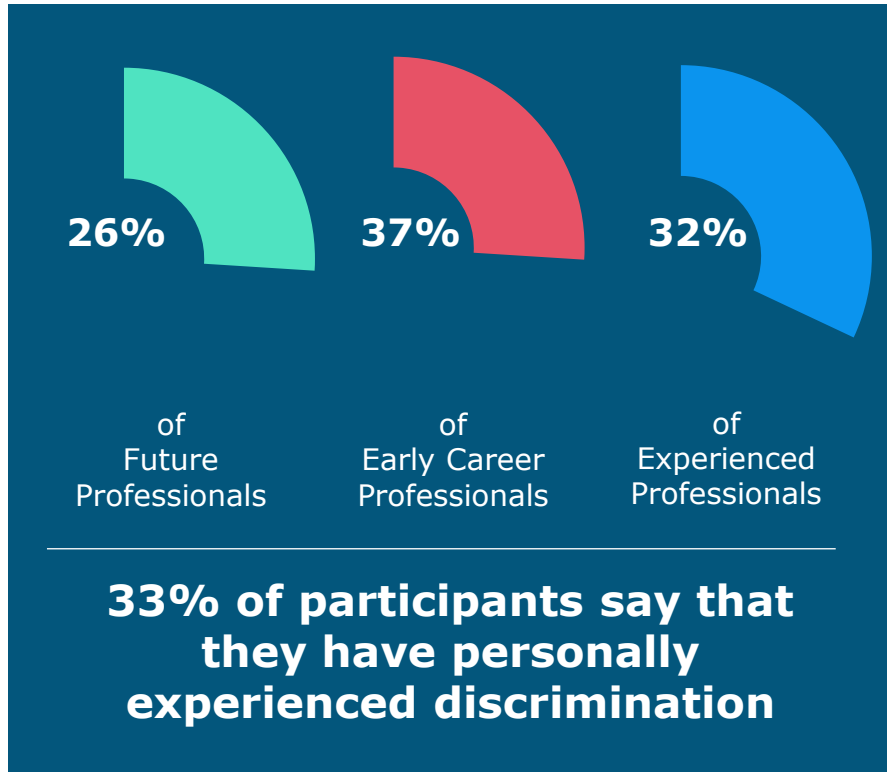■ Future Professionals ■ Early Career Professionals ■ Experienced Professionals

*"It ranged from **unfair criticism of my work**, which was not explained or introduced to me beforehand, to being **expected to help with the upkeep of the directors house**, I was expected to **never leave the office before the director** and to **make her drinks and lunch when she wanted it.**"*
- Future Professional

*"In my previous position at a large practice, it was part of the culture that **cliques would form around more senior staff members**. This would **lead to bullying or demeaning behaviour** by members of other cliques."*
- Experienced Professional

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A third say that they have experienced discrimination – and this rises to over half in some demographic groups

26%
of Future Professionals

37%
of Early Career Professionals

32%
of Experienced Professionals

33% of participants say that they have personally experienced discrimination

This rises to:
- **53%** of **female** architects
- **46%** of those from **ethnic minorities**
- **46%** of those with **disabilities***

38% overall

Insults, stereotypes or jokes relating to protected characteristics

- Future professionals: 28%
- Early Career Professionals: 40%
- Experienced Professionals: 38%

32% overall

Being overlooked or undermined for reasons relating to protected characteristics

- Future professionals: 29%
- Early Career Professionals: 33%
- Experienced Professionals: 31%

30% overall

Being excluded from development and training opportunities that peers can access

- Future professionals: 31%
- Early Career Professionals: 31%
- Experienced Professionals: 29%

■ Future professionals ■ Early Career Professionals ■ Experienced Professionals

*"Clients **minimising or belittling staff** members owing to **their race or English-speaking skills**, and seniors **not defending or calling out behaviour.**"*
- Experienced Professional

*"Comments made about whether or not I'm going to have **children** and how that will **damage my career prospects.**"*
- Early Career Professional

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A significant proportion of professionals report experiences of sexual misconduct

6%

of Future Professionals

11%

of Early Career Professionals

10%

of Experienced Professionals

10% say that they have personally experienced sexual misconduct

Female professionals are far more likely to have experienced **unwelcome sexual comments (38%)** and **unwelcome sexual advances (24%)** than male professionals (6% and 5%).

Professionals with disabilities are also more likely to have experienced unwelcome sexual comments (24% vs 19% with no disability) and unwelcome sexual advances (19% vs 12% with no disability).

19% overall

12%	23%	18%

Unwelcome sexual comments

12% overall

8%	13%	13%

Unwelcome sexual advances

■ Future Professionals   ■ Early Career Professionals   ■ Experienced Professionals
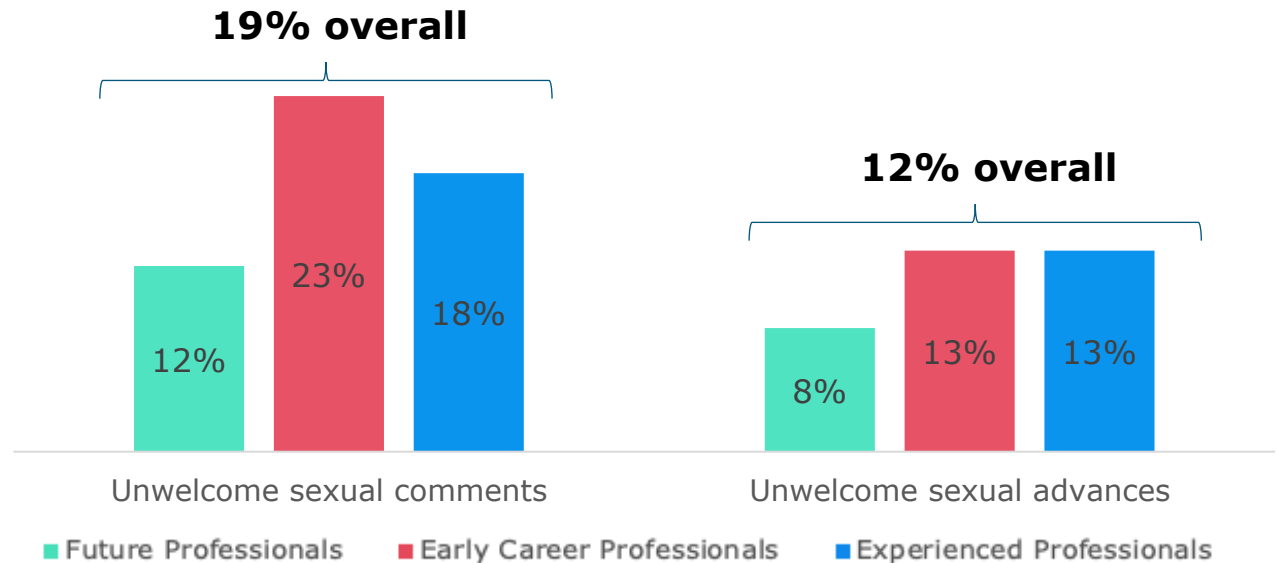
"A sweepstake amongst male staff to see who could get me into bed (as one of two women in 50+ office)."*
- Experienced Professional

"Client requested 'a lush young with tight skirt' be sent for a survey, **director let me know I will be doing the survey the day I was wearing a tight skirt.** The request has later been revealed in an email chain."*
- Early Career Professional

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A third of professionals would not feel confident raising concerns about misconduct

Confidence raising a concern related to misconduct
(NET % unconfident)

33% overall

33%
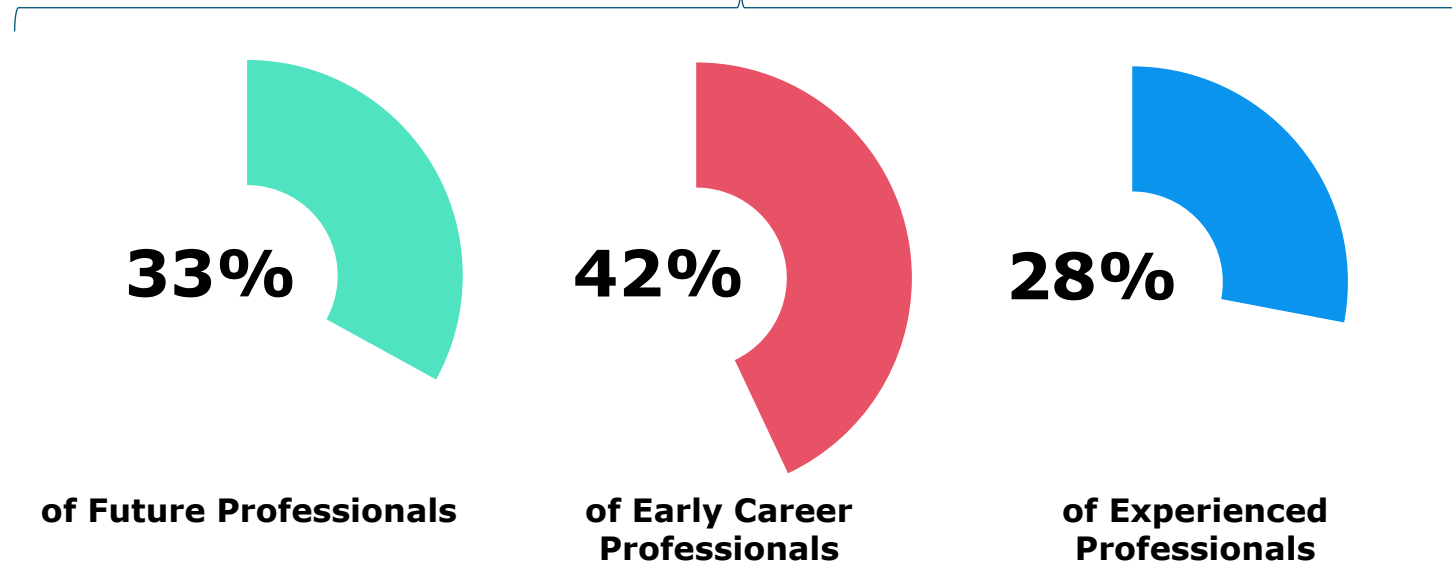
of Future Professionals

"When concerns like this are raised, [they are] completely, completely met with hostility, or [a threat] to job security."
- Future Professional

42%

of Early Career Professionals

"It's a stain on you because then the higher-ups talk to each other, and they might refuse to give you a reference… you're effectively jeopardising your future employment."
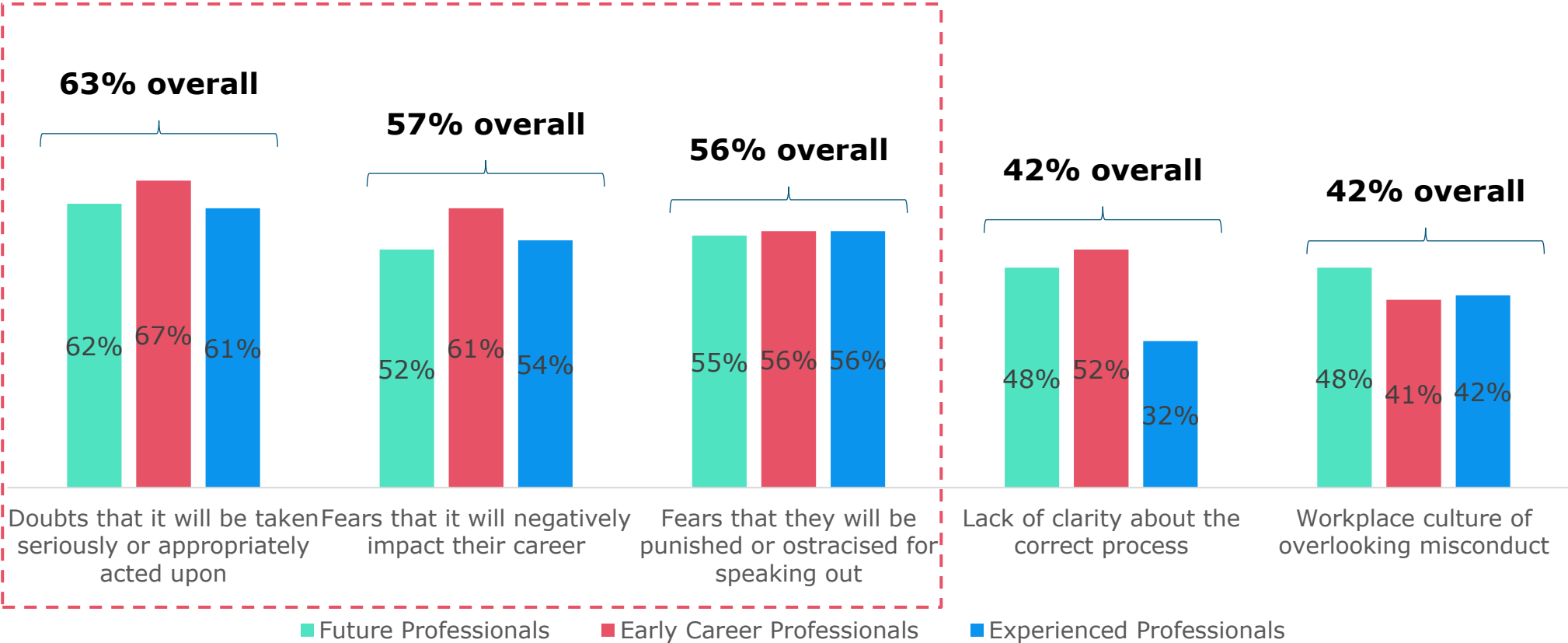- Early Career Professional

28%

of Experienced Professionals

Those who have **experienced any misconduct regularly are far more likely to lack confidence in raising concerns (61%)** compared to those who have not experienced any misconduct (7%).

Female professionals (40%) are more likely to report lacking confidence to raise concerns than males (28%).

Q18. If you were to experience or observe workplace misconduct, to what extent would you feel confident that you can raise a concern? In your answer, please think about your confidence in understanding the appropriate process and how you would feel about using this process. Base: All respondents (n=898); Future Professionals (n=89), Early Career Professionals (n=293), Experienced Professionals (n=516)

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Largely because there are multiple barriers to feeling confident in reporting misconduct...

But this is largely because they don't think it will be taken seriously **and** will in turn affect their career progression.

63% overall

57% overall

56% overall

42% overall

42% overall

Barrier	Future Professionals	Early Career Professionals	Experienced Professionals
Doubts that it will be taken seriously or appropriately acted upon	62%	67%	61%
Fears that it will negatively impact their career	52%	61%	54%
Fears that they will be punished or ostracised for speaking out	55%	56%	56%
Lack of clarity about the correct process	48%	52%	32%
Workplace culture of overlooking misconduct	48%	41%	42%

■ Future Professionals ■ Early Career Professionals ■ Experienced Professionals

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Misconduct is felt to be rooted in a chain of structural and cultural factors
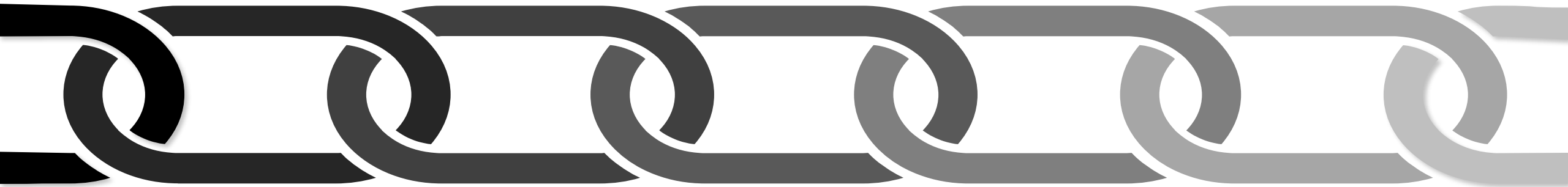
Excessive workload

The stress of **excessive workloads and a culture of unsustainable hours** are felt to contribute to misconduct.

"Mandated hours would give everyone the breathing space to act in an exemplary fashion."

- Early Career Professional

Hierarchies

Hierarchies that create **significant power imbalances** within the profession can place some into more **vulnerable situations.**

"There's a power imbalance, and those who are lower find it so hard to stand up."

- Early Career Professional

Lack of representation

Some feel that a lack of representation (particularly at senior levels) **limits understanding of others' experiences**.

"Looking for a job I'll see if there are other people of ethnic minority backgrounds… to avoid the same discrimination."

- Future Professional

Management structures

Many practices are seen to **lack the management and HR structures** and procedures that may tackle misconduct and its causes.

"I've never worked in a company that had an HR ever, ever. So my boss is jury, judge and executioner."

- Early Career Professional

Cyclical mistreatment

A minority identify cyclical mistreatment, where some senior professionals **echo poor treatment** that they have **previously endured.**

"The culture of silence is so engrained; these cycles of abuse and bullying mentalities have been continuing for decades."

- Early Career Professional
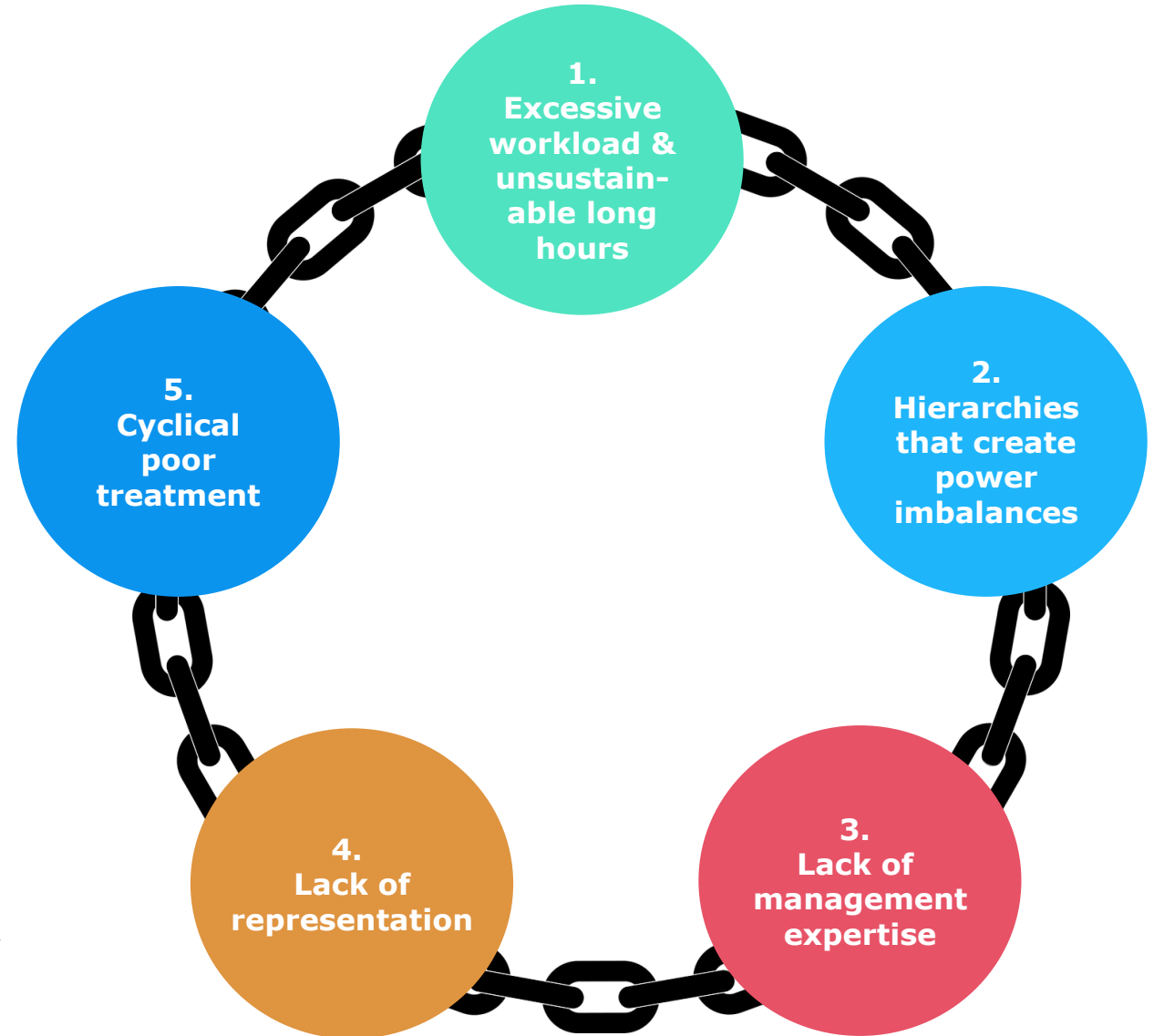
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Good practice

Despite overarching issues, there is scope within the profession to do well

Experiences in the profession are far from uniformly negative, and many professionals do enjoy a supportive and friendly workplace.

In some cases, professionals who have encountered issues have had **more positive experiences at another practice** or after transitioning to sole practice.

Professionals also understand that these issues are not insurmountable, and **while the culture of the profession is often negative, this does not apply to every practice.**

From their experiences in the profession, **professionals highlight ways to address the chain of factors** which are felt to harm workplace culture and enable misconduct.

1. Excessive workload & unsustain-able long hours

2. Hierarchies that create power imbalances

3. Lack of management expertise

4. Lack of representation

5. Cyclical poor treatment

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1. Tackling excessive workload and a culture of unsustainable long hours

Professionals accept **there will be busy periods and project deadlines which may require working late.** However, it becomes problematic when working overtime becomes the norm and they feel that they are not compensated fairly.

And these problems become even more difficult to resolve because **professionals see their colleagues working late and feel compelled to do the same.**

Senior architects, who foster good conduct and practice at their firms from the top-down, address excessive workload and unsustainable long hours in a variety of ways:

1. They are more selective with clients	**2. A culture of unsustainable long hours is discouraged**	**3. Projects are resourced properly**
They take on fewer and more lucrative contracts, meaning less work and of a higher quality, and thus a better culture.	Upper management sets the right example, not working unsustainable long hours and ensuring long hours are not incentivised.	Excessive workloads are symptoms of inefficient project management. Overworking is a problem that lies with the firm.

"There's this sort of warrior mentality, that if you're in there the longest, you're doing the most, and you'll get noticed. Here, you don't get rewarded for being in here all the time."

- Experienced Professional

"For the more junior staff in our practice, there is sometimes pressure for them to work. It's a mixed bag. It's to do with how well we as a practice are managing them."

- Experienced Professional

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2. Tackling hierarchies that create significant power imbalances

Hierarchy is not seen to be a consistently negative aspect of the profession. **Some professionals feel it provides clarity and a chain of command**.

Hierarchy becomes an issue when it creates significant power imbalances, disrupting workplace cohesion and discouraging open communication. **Concerns in the workplace cannot be resolved if they cannot be addressed.**

Senior architects who **prioritise a collaborative workplace** indicate several ways they try to address issues around hierarchy:

1. 'Pitching in' is encouraged and rewarded
Every idea is considered, regardless of an individual's place within the workplace hierarchy.

2. Honesty across roles is encouraged
One firm holds forums for colleagues to flag and discuss their concerns. This allows the firm to move forward together.

3. Training and education is prioritised
Senior staff supporting their junior colleagues fosters better working relationships between everyone.

"Generally, everyone's contribution has been valued, and there's been a culture where whoever's got the best idea, that idea will be accepted – it doesn't need to come from the top."

\- Experienced Professional

"I think there can be a sense of detachment between people that are leading the practice and people that are on the ground delivering the work. I think communication across those levels and making sure that everyone's included [is good]."

\- Experienced Professional

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3. Tackling lack of management expertise

Architects **are often promoted into management positions based on their skills as an architect,** not their leadership or management skills.

Crucial training for managing people is missing. Additionally, HR functions often fall by the wayside. There is evidence of more abuse of power in larger firms, but fewer mechanisms to address it in smaller firms.

Senior architects attempt to address a lack of managerial skills **in two primary ways:**

1. Promotions are not solely based on technical expertise
Skills related to leadership, finance, and project management are all taken into consideration before someone moves up within the firm. This is crucial if they lack a dedicated HR function.

2. Architects are given training to equip them for new responsibilities
This aligns with the goal of enabling internal progression and allowing employees to grow according to the needs of the organisation.

"You've got to be prepared to put the time aside to help [colleagues]. Because if someone asks for help and you don't help them, you might as well stand on their head when they're drowning."

- Experienced Professional

"If someone's next step is to become an associate or get into a leadership role, we're looking at what training we could give them in those aspects – leadership, financial management."

- Experienced Professional

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4. Tackling lack of representation

One of the most common observations in the profession is that **it remains primarily led by white, male architects.**

Women, ethnic minorities, or professionals with disabilities feel the lack of representation in upper management makes it **more difficult for their experiences to be understood and addressed.**

Firms with **greater representation, especially in management positions**, can make a big difference in two specific ways:

1. Firms with a more diverse leadership can be more sensitive to the range of employee needs
For example, some professionals with family commitments share that the approach of their company's leaders can help them remain within the profession, rather than being forced to leave.

2. Firms with a more diverse workforce encourage underrepresented groups to remain in the profession
This in turn helps to facilitate change within the profession. Some success has been made here – but more needs to be done.

"I'd like to see more diversity at senior and above levels…I also believe more women leaders would help provide a better work/home balance and have more empathy at work."

- Early Career Professional

"A lack of diversity in leadership positions can perpetuate a cycle where under-represented groups have fewer roles."

- Experienced Professional

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5. Tackling cyclical poor treatment

Some professionals feel that issues in the workplace stem from **ways of working at university and architecture school.**

Professionals recount the high stress, excessive workloads, and poor treatment which students often experience, and **believe some senior architects could now be passing outdated and regressive learned behaviours onto their junior employees.**

It is felt that many **older architects have a mindset of forcing younger colleagues to endure what they had to endure,** but change is happening**:**

1. Firms with positive cultures take steps to re-educate younger employees
Teaching new skills and discouraging carrying the culture of overwork into employment, with impetus coming from the top.

2. Younger architects enter the workforce knowing their rights
They understand when misconduct is taking place, although their power to address it as it occurs varies.

3. Younger professionals may carry modern values into positions where they can affect change
However, ageism remains an issue for older professionals.

"There is a lack of empathy, particularly for younger overworked staff. There is still a culture of 'I went through it, so you have to.'"
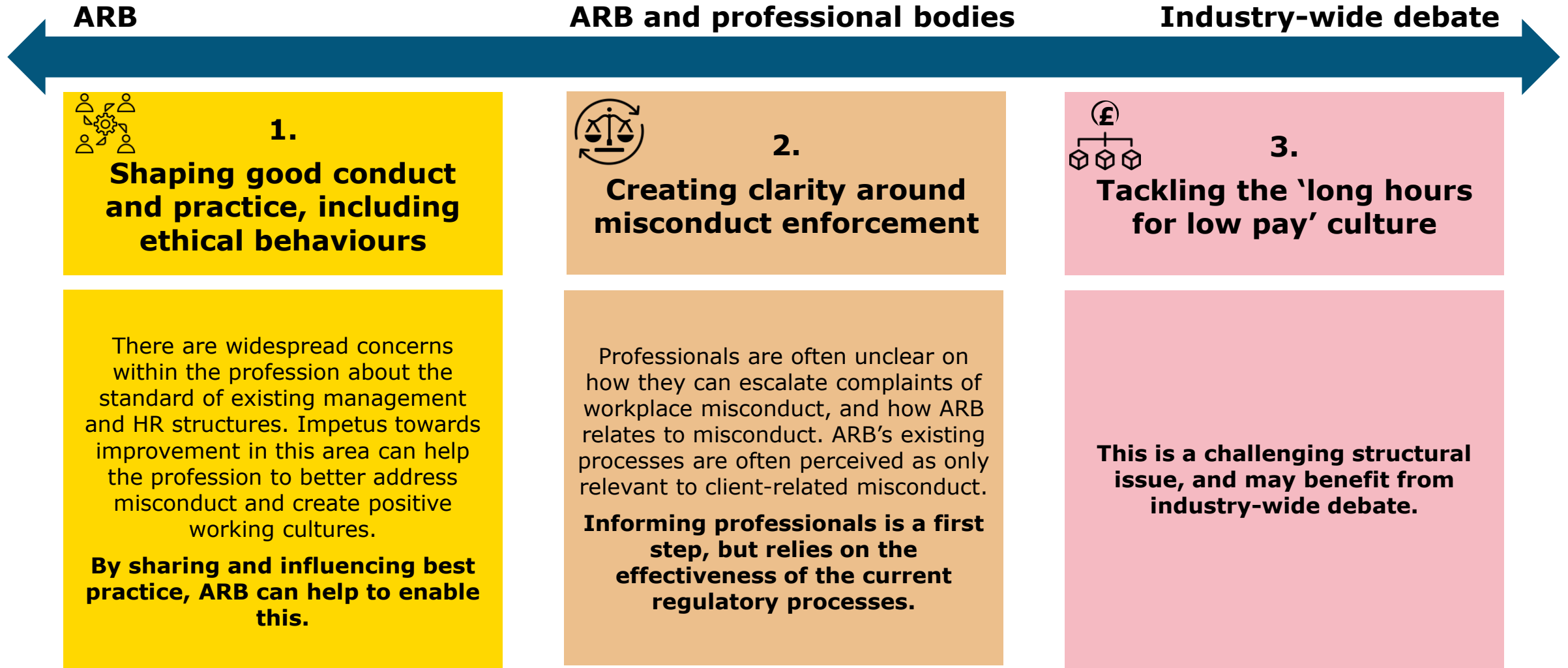
- Future Professional

"Younger architects value their wellbeing more now than when I started in the profession. And they do not work the long hours that I did, which is a good thing."

- Experienced Professional

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Considerations going forwards

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Overall, three key areas for consideration have emerged from the research

ARB   ARB and professional bodies   Industry-wide debate

1.

Shaping good conduct and practice, including ethical behaviours

2.

Creating clarity around misconduct enforcement

3.

Tackling the 'long hours for low pay' culture

There are widespread concerns within the profession about the standard of existing management and HR structures. Impetus towards improvement in this area can help the profession to better address misconduct and create positive working cultures.

By sharing and influencing best practice, ARB can help to enable this.

Professionals are often unclear on how they can escalate complaints of workplace misconduct, and how ARB relates to misconduct. ARB's existing processes are often perceived as only relevant to client-related misconduct.

Informing professionals is a first step, but relies on the effectiveness of the current regulatory processes.

This is a challenging structural issue, and may benefit from industry-wide debate.

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